

IPAAASO

Souvenir 2025





A Message from the Secretary

Dear Patrons,

Welcome to the 18th Annual Indian Music and Dance Festival! I hope you and your families have enjoyed attending IFAASD music and dance programs this season. During this year's festival, we are excited to celebrate the musical legacies of Bharat Ratna Pandit Ravi Shankar, Padma Bhushan C.R. Vyas, Padma Shri Parasala Ponnammal, and Padma Vibhushan Zakir Hussain. In addition, we will be honoring highly accomplished artists including Padma Vibhushan Amjad Ali Khan, Lalgudi Srimathi Brahmanandam, Anindo Chatterjee, Padma Shri Narthaki Nataraj, Jayanthi Subramanian, and Vidya Nidhi. We will also be recognizing the contributions of Rajeshwary Bhatt, Viji Prakash, Banu Jaiganesh, Subbu Iyer, and Ganesh Bhat to classical Indian music and dance with Samaja Seva Rathna awards.

On behalf of the board of the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego, I want to thank you for your continued support throughout the past year. Your active participation in the academy's activities as well as your financial contributions to its growth and development have enabled us to have a very busy and productive year. This past year, we featured Carnatic vocalists Pantula Rama, Pattabhiram Pandit, Gayathri Girish, Carnatica Brothers, NJ Nandini, Aruna Sairam, Ranjani Sivakumar, Bhargavi Balasubramanian, Amrutha Murali, Suchitra Balasubramanian, and Krithika Natarajan as well as

Carnatic instrumentalists J.A. Jayanth, Mysore Nagraj, and Mysore Manjunath. In addition, we staged a veena-santoor Jugalbandhi concert featuring Nirmala Rajasekar and Sandip Chatterjee and a Carnatic Jugalbandhi program by Padma Shri A. Kanyakumari, Kamalakiran Vinjamuri, and Sivateja Mallajosyula with Patri Satishkumar on mridangam. In addition to traditional Carnatic and Hindustani concerts, IFAASD was excited to present a few unique programs during this year's season: "Heartbeat" by Ghatam Karthick, a performance by Kabir singers, and a spectacular film music event by Padma Bhushan K.S. Chitra.

Beyond our year-round concert series, IFAASD successfully staged a memorable Youth Festival for the seventh year in a row. During this festival, we gave 23 young artists from across North America the unique opportunity to perform on our San Diego stage. These young artists demonstrated extraordinary talent and dedication to their chosen disciplines, which included Carnatic and Hindustani instrumental and vocal music as well as dance forms such as Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak. This year, IFAASD also staged a Broadway style extravaganza entitled, 'Krishnaa- Fire to Frost,' by Nirupama, Rajendra, and a company of 22 dancers; a violin quartet celebrating the Lalgudi style by students of Anuradha Sridhar; and a margam by Meera Sreenarayanan.

In conjunction with the team of organizers of the Cleveland Aradhana, the IFAASD board's vision for this year's festival is to add more depth and dimension to the academy's repertoire under the title, "Oneness of the Universe." We are keenly focused on our future together as we celebrate 18 years of adventurous artistic engagement. For the next seven days, our wonderful city of San Diego will become a much sought after destination in Southern California as we host 16 events featuring over 76 artists from India and around the U.S. and over 150 young students of music and dance from within San Diego itself.

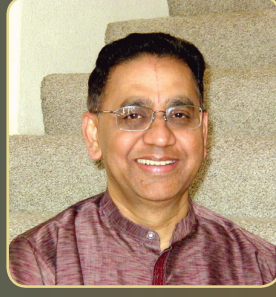
The board joins me in inviting all of you to thoroughly enjoy the high caliber vocal, instrumental, and dance programs presented throughout the entirety of this grand festival. We greatly appreciate your support and presence at every one of the events scheduled over the next week.

Once more, I'd like to extend a hearty welcome to all of you and wish you all an enjoyable experience as patrons of the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego!

Sincerely,

Shekar Viswanathan

Secretary, Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego



Sangeeta Acharya

Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan

Chair of Festival

Sangeeta Acharya Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan is a Vākgèyakāra, Védic scholar, poet, lyricist, composer, journalist, a story writer, and an operatic playwright. Krishnan was trained in Karṇāṭaka Sangītam by his father Gāna-Bhūshaṇam Brahmasri Kumāramangalam Srinivāsa-Rāghavan (KSR or Rāgasri), and by many other legends of the 20th Century including Maharājapuram Viswanātha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G.N. Bala Subramanyam. Krishnan has been performing since 1955 in India, Far East Asia, Europe, Great Britain, and the United States, accompanied by well-known artists many of whom are leading names in the Indian Music world. Krishnan is also a celebrated exponent of “Dakshina-sampradaya-Sankeertanam, Abhang-Sankeertan & Hari-Kathā traditions”, performing these divine formats encompassing music from Hindusthāni and Karnataka-Sangeeta traditions of India. His Gurus for these ancient traditions include Brahmasri Rāgasri, Brahmasri Nāthamuni Nārāyaṇa-Iyengar, Abhang Sirónmañi Nárāyaṇa-Sāstri, and Swámi Haridoss Giri (renowned as ‘Guruji’) with whom Krishnan had performed since 1959 through Guruji’s Jeevan-samadhi in 1990s. Krishnan’s earliest Opera based on three versions of “Rámāyaṇa”, titled Sitāyāscaritam-Mahat or Triveni-Ramayana” was staged first in 1965, in India. A thespian since youth, Krishnan had performed in the prestigious Kalidas Festivals in Ujjain to play leading roles in many of Kalidas’s famed works. He has hundreds of live recordings and compact discs; some of which are also available, on-line, and also on two YouTube channels (Rāgasri & GuruBhakti).

A disciple of His Holiness Jagadguru Kanchi Paramāchārya (68th Pontiff of the Adi Sankara Order), Krishnan continued training in the Vedas and scriptures in Sanskrit College, Madras under the direct auspices of Paramāchārya. His most recent book, ‘Periyavā Kāladīyilirundu’ detailing his personal interactions with on HH Paramāchārya, over a 10-year period, is well received.

Krishnan with his wife Radha and his daughters/disciples, Priya, Harini & Subha (aka ‘Krishnan-Sisters’ in the music world) are all involved in several philanthropic & charitable causes. Krishnan’s performances are mostly, if not all of them, fundraisers for Charities and Philanthropy and for temples; those live recordings supplement the Krishnans’ support to charities, Homes for the mentally and physically challenged and hospitals for the underprivileged.

A gold medalist in the 1960s from the University of Madras, India, Krishnan has been a Fellow of the Royal Chartered Institute of Bankers (London) and a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Accountants (London). Krishnan has held top executive positions with several International Banks, in Asia, Europe, Great Britain and the US, and has widely traveled the globe for more than 50 years. He is the founder CEO and Chairmen of several reputed US Fiduciary firms that served as Receivers, Trustees, Regulator, Monitor et al. at the nomination of US Federal and State Agencies, Regulators, Banks, and Foreign Governments. He has served as a United States Trustee and also as the Special Deputy Commissioner of California State for Financial Protection & Innovation.



भारत का प्रधान कौंसलावास
CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA
San Francisco



Message

Music and dance are integral to India's rich heritage, bridging cultures and connecting people globally.

As a Consul General, I commend Shri Shekar Vishwanathan, the President, and Secretary of the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego (IFAASD) for outstanding efforts in preserving and promoting India's diverse musical traditions.

Congratulations to IFAASD on celebrating the 18th edition of the Indian Music Festival in San Diego as part of the 2025 Annual Music Festival. This event serves as a valuable platform for showcasing India's vibrant cultural legacy and fostering deeper cultural ties between India and the United States.

K. Srikar Reddy
Dr. Srikar Reddy Koppula

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“Rāmāyaṇam” through the prisms of Sadguru Tyāgarāja-Swāmi

Thiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan



Prologue:

Salutations to the patrons of IFAA, the regular readers of this Souvenir, and also to the serious Karṇāṭaka Sangīta Vidwāns, students and rasikās, who believe in the fundamental premise that our system of music is a spiritual process; and, finally, to the Indologists from different Universities around the world, who may come to read this.

In my 60+ years as a journalist, musician, musicologist, and composer, one of my principal sources of musical and spiritual knowledge has been the immortal compositions of Saint Tyāgarāja (“Swami”), also called reverentially, Sadguru Tyāgarāja (“Sadguru”), as it has been for millions of ardent devotees of Tyāgarāja. Thousands of aspiring young learners of Karṇāṭaka Sangītam, living in countries (especially) outside of India, are in need for authentic information and unbiased analysis of his music and spirituality as well as his linguistic prowess.

In that context, I thank the IFAA, San Diego, again, for publishing dozens of my articles on numerous topics and musical saints. A recent article titled ‘[Can our ancient music tradition continue to remain relevant, Sans Bhakti? = Karṇāṭaka Sangītam as we know \(or do not know\) Today!](#)’ (2024) and a short biography with an overview of [Tyāgarāja’s immortal contributions](#) (2017), in “commemoration of the 250th birth Centenary of the great Saint-Composer” are directly relevant to the current article. Readers are encouraged to read those and other articles on IFAA’s website, for additional information and analyses.

Tyāgarāja’s pearls from Rāmāyaṇam

There is widely held belief that Vālmīki was reborn in Kaliyuga as Tyāgarāja, primarily for the purpose of singing the praise of Rama musically and spreading the value of Rama-bhakti which he equates to a Sāmrājyam or Empire, with special help from Sage Narada, directly and indirectly! Tyāgarāja gifted to the south Indian music world, the basics, expertise and knowledge to compositional excellence and education in story-telling, soaking every one of his compositions in Bhakti. Even though his available compositions are numerically small, about 650, they help lay the foundation for music learners and professional musicians who use a tenth of that number. For the Sankeertana Bhāgavatās who sing Tyāgarāja’s compositions for non-pecuniary and divine experience, that fountain is eternal.

Tyāgarāja did not compose any single work that can be called ‘Tyāgarāja’ Rāmāyaṇam. A musical drama called ‘[Sītārāma-Vijayamu](#)’ based on the Uttara Kāṇḍā, is attributed to Tyāgarāja, but no manuscript is available/traceable. His other operas ‘[Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu](#)’ and ‘[Nowka Charitramu](#)’ are on themes not related to Rāmāyaṇam. Against this backdrop, Tyāgarāja’s Rāmāyaṇam, as we fervently highlight, is not any conscious attempt by Tyāgarāja, a great Rāmābhakta, at a new composition or yet another version of Rāmāyaṇam, but rather a unique compilation of hundreds of individual songs, with references direct and indirect, to various incidents and episodes in Rāmāyaṇam from the Bala Kāṇḍā to the Yuddha Kāṇḍā. A third of Sadguru’s spontaneous compositions spotlight anecdotes from the Epic, by colorful descriptions, skillfully woven into the mood, theme and the lyrics of the songs.

Also, Tyāgarāja never composed any of those anecdotal songs in the same sequence of the epic or by following the Rāmāyana-story order, nor did he declare anywhere that “here is my Rāmāyana.” His songs were spontaneously appreciating various scenes and anecdotes as the compositions sprung out of him. It is only that his disciples and later devotees of Sadguru started sequencing them as per their moods and appreciation.

Tyāgarāja’s father, Rāmā-Brahmam, was an expert narrator of Rāmāyaṇam (Rāmāyana-prasanga-nipunulu). According to the Wālājāpet version of Tyāgarāja’s life, Rāmā-Brahmam had formal initiation into the Rāmā-Tāraka mantra from Sankeertana-Nipuna, MarudAnallUr Sadguru-swāmigaḷ. The father did the mantropadesa to his son,

after Tyāgarāja had his Brahmopadesam. The same account also mentions that while yet a boy, Tyāgarāja received a further initiation into the ‘Rāmā-shadākshari’ (Mahā-mantra of Rāmā) from Saint Rāmā-Krishnānanda (to whom Tyāgarāja gives a benedictory salutation in his opera “*Nowkā Charitramu*”). No wonder, Tyāgarāja got attracted to the literary beauty and philosophical teachings from Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇam, from which bed rock and foundation, sprang his unwavering Rāmā-bhakti, as the young devotee commenced his divinely musical life. Tyāgarāja’s Rāmābhakti, so deeply ingrained in him, infused each and every one of his compositions with its own fragrance and was the basis for the idea of great scholars that Tyāgarāja was indeed a reincarnation of Vālmīki.

Scholars and great Bhāgavatās maintain that Tyāgarāja may have studied other extant versions of the Epic, such as Rāmcharitmānas (Tulsi), Rāmāvatāram (Kampa Chakravarti), Adyātma Rāmāyaṇam (Ezhuttachan), Sangraha Rāmāyaṇa (Narayana-panditāchārya) and Rāmā-nātakam (Arunāchala Kavi) They also aver that Tyāgarāja may have been influenced by them, based on Tyāgarāja’s interpretation of events in his songs!

Let us now begin a short journey of Tyāgarāja’s songs on Rāmā-katha.

1) Tyāgarāja expresses his wonderment on the Incarnation of Rama, and also questions Him:

ए पनिको जन्मिञ्चितिननि - नीवेञ्च वलदु श्री राम ने / नी चित्तमुनकु तेलियदा ने
वाल्मीकादि मुनुलु नरुलु निञ्चु - वर्णिञ्चिरि नायास तीरुना - मेल्मियेयुण्डु सद्दक्तुलु मेच्चुदुरे

Tyāgarāja asks in his *asāveri* kriti (E *paniko Janminchiti*), “O Rāmā, don’t you know why I am born in this world? I know, you know by now! Can my desire be quenched simply by listening to Vālmīki and others singing your praise?”

2) In a rare kriti in *Varali* raga, “*Ee-menu kaliginanduku Seeta-Rāmā-nāname palkavalenu*” Tyāgarāja begins by highlighting the value of chanting Rāmā-nāma; then begins as to how a waylaying burglar, hunter (Vālmīki who lived such a survival-lifestyle to protect his family), upon advice and induction by Sage Narada, recited Rāmā-nāma and became purified and transformed (into the greatest of poets, composing the Epic Rāmāyaṇa). “सम्सारमुनु ब्रोवदारिनि परहिम्सजेन्दुखिरातुडु – हम्सरूपुलगतिनडुग रामनामप्रसम्स जेसि उपदेसिन्च धन्युडुकादा”

3) The next set of questions to Rāmā by Tyāgarāja is in ‘*Elāvātārametthukontivi – Emi kāraṇamu?*’ in ‘*Sālaga-Bhairavi*,’ one of the *Janya* rāgās that over the centuries have come to be known as a ‘Tyāgarāja-Ragam’
एलावतारं-एत्तुकोण्टिवि? - एमि कारणमु रामुडै? (1) आलमु सेयुटका? (2) अयोध्य-पालन सेयुटका? ओ राघव -
(3) योगुलु जूचुटन्दुका (4) भव-रोगुल ब्रोचुटन्दुका (5) शत-राग रत्न मालिकलु रचिञ्चिन त्यागराजुकु वरमोसगुटन्दुका? (एला)

O Raghava! why did you take Rāmāvatāram? (1) Is it just for waging a war? Or (2) is it for ruling over Ayōdhya? (3) Is it for the special purpose that the ascetics could behold You? Or (4) is it for protecting those afflicted by the disease of ‘Worldly Existence’? (5) or is it for the purpose of bestowing boon on this Tyāgarāja who has composed garlands of hundreds of exquisite rāgās? (Please tell me); what is the actual reason?

[Note: many performers sing this in *mukhāri* raga, but old-timers maintain the tradition of singing in ‘*Sālaga-Bhairavi*.’]

4) In his song in *Easa-Manohari* raga; ‘*Manasa Sri Rāmāchandrūni maravake*,’ Tyāgarāja admonishes his mind; ‘do not forget Rāmāchāndrā;’ (usually such self-admonition is deemed ‘message’ for all of us). The special usages are noteworthy. (1) ‘मुनु पुट्टनु पुट्टिन मौनि कृतमौ मूडुन्नारध्यायमुल जूचुको (मनसा) = ‘O mind, Don’t be casual; if you want to know the truth or secret behind the birth of Vālmīki (the son of Lord Varuna born of an ant-hill), refer to 3rd and 6th chapters (in *Bālakāṇḍam* of Vālmīki’s Epic, as per *Veerabhadra Sastry who wrote the treatise*); (2) सृष्टि पुष्टि नष्टि सेयु पनुलु - निकृष्टमनुचुनु त्रिमूर्तलकोसगि - तुष्टुडै परगे सद्दक्त-मनोभीष्टमुलिच्चे श्रीरामचन्द्रुनि मरवके = Tyāgarāja praises that Rāmā, who is greater than the Supreme Trinity (Vishnu, Shiva & Brahma), ‘handed the tasks of creation, sustenance and dissolution to the Trinity so that ‘He’ can remain content, bestowing blessings to His true devotees!

5) In another instance, Tyāgarāja exclaims in his vivacious ‘*Devamanohari*,’ ‘why did you come down as Rama?’
‘ऐवरिकै अवतारं-एत्तितिवो? / इपुडैन तेलुपवय्य, रामय्य-राम! - मुनि राज वेषियौ / अवनिकि रम्मनि पिलिचिन महराजु
एवडो वानिकि मोक्केद - वेद वर्णनीयमौ नाममुतो- विधि रुद्रलकु मेल्मियगु रूपमुतो -मोद सदनमगु पटु चरितमुतो
O emperor Rāmā! (praised by this Tyāgarāja) in the garb of an ascetic king! At least now tell me as to why (or at whose beckoning), You took this incarnation (a) with a name described even in the ancient Vedas (b) with a physical form surpassing that of Rudra and Brahma, and (c) with an impeccable character which is the source of great joy (for the listeners of your story). I salute that great person who beckoned You to come to this Earth.

6) One of the earliest Kritis that one of my other Gurus, Sri Maharājapuram Viswanatha Iyer, taught me more than 65 years ago is the popular Sankeertana Paddati kriti, “*Sri Rāmā, Jaya Rāmā (Raghu Rāmā), Srīngāra Rāmāyāni*” in the effusive Yadukula-kambhoji raga, which all Hari-Kathā and Sankeertana Bhāgavatās enjoy at an emotional level, at every rendition. In eight out of nine stanzas, Tyāgarāja adroitly mixes the emotions of jealousy and admiration.

(प) श्री राम रघु राम शृंगार रामयनि चिन्तिम्प रादे ओ मनसा

1. तळुकु चेक्कुल मुद्दु पेट्ट कौसल्य मुनु तपमेमि जेसेनो (कौसल्य तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
2. दशरथुडु श्री राम रारायनि पिल्व मुनु तपमेमि जेसेनो (दशरथुडु तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
3. तनिवार परिचर्य सेय सौमित्रि मुनु तपमेमिजेसेनो (सौमित्रि तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
4. तन वेण्ट चन जूचियुप्पोंग कौशिकुडु तपमेमिजेसेनो (कौशिकुडु तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
5. तापम्बणगि रूपवतियौटकहल्य तपमेमिजेसेनो (अहल्य तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
6. धर्मात्म चरणम्बु सोक शिव चापम्बु तपमेमिजेसेनो (चापम्बु तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
7. तन तनयनोसगि कनुलार कन जनकुण्डु तपमेमिजेसेनो (जनकुण्डु तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
8. दहरम्बु करग करमुनु पट्ट जानकि तपमेमिजेसेनो (जानकि तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)
9. त्यागराजाप्तयनि पोंगड नारद मौनि तपमेमिजेसेनो (आ मौनि तपमेमि जेसेनो) तेलिय (श्री)

O Mind! Won't You meditate as 'Sri-Rāmā, Raghu Rāmā, Jaya Rāmā, Srīngāra-Rāmā'?

Who knows as to what penances all of those had performed earlier (to merit such gifts/blessings)!

Kausalya - to kiss Lord Rāmā on His gleaming cheeks!

Dasarathā - to beckon the Lord as 'hey, Sri Rāmā, come here'!

Lakshmaṇa - to undertake service of the Lord to his heart's content!

Sage Viśvāmitra - to exult beholding the Lord simply following him!

ahalyā - to become a beautiful woman again, relieved of her distress!

The bow of Lord Siva - to touch the holy feet of the Rāmā, the Embodiment of Righteousness!

Janaka - to behold the Lord to the total satiation of his eyes by offering his daughter as wife to the Lord!

Seeta - to hold the hand of the Lord as her heart melted away in Bliss!

Sage Nārada - to extol the Lord as the benefactor of this Tyāgarāja!

- 7) Tyāgarāja sang two kritis (a) “*Meluko dayānidhī*” in Saurashtra Raga and (b) ‘*Melukovayya*’ in Bauḷi Raga with almost similar sentiments but colorful variations in style, and raga; in the first one, Rama is described without Seeta and Tyāgarāja's offerings include butter and milk in golden cups while being waited upon by celestials, while in the second one, Rama is seen with Seeta and reposing on Sessa-sayanam. These two songs are not confined to Bala kāṇḍā alone!
- 8) One of the most exquisite kritis of Tyāgarāja, in Sahana Raga, “*Rama Rama Rama Laali – Lavanya Laali*” shows Swami's extraordinary prowess and divine ability to create a near-visual imagery of an imaginative conversation between Kausalya and Rama, the little boy.

- (P). राम राम राम लालि श्री राम राम राम लावण्य लालि
- 1. दोरक-रानि निधि रारा दोरकु -दोरवु नीवु तोटललो रारा (राम) /
- 2. वरमैनट्टि ना पट्टि रारा वर - सुरुलकु अरुदैन सुन्दर रारा (राम)
- 3. तोलि जेसिन नोमु फलमा राम - इलनु वेलयु मा इन कुल धनमा (राम) /
- 4. कल कलमनि रावु चेन्त - आकलि कोण्टिवो लेक करुणा स्वान्त (राम)
- 5. मद गज गमन ना स्वामि ओ - सदयुड नी-लोनि जालि तेलुमी (राम) /
- 6. सरि बालुलाड रम्मनिरि आडि - वरद नीवु रा-वदुदु पोम्मनिरि (राम)
- 7. ऐवरु निन्नु एमनिरि - राघव नीयेड तप्पु कनि रा-वदुनिरि (राम) /
- 8. कनुलु मूसियाडिनारु - करमुनकणगनि नेत्रमनि कसरेदरु (राम)
- 9. कलुव रेकुलनु पोळु कनुलु - कलगनेल नन्नु कन्न दयाळो (राम) /
- 10. तेट कन्नुलनु मूसेदरु ना - तोडि वारुलेल्ल पो-वदुनेदरु (राम)
- 11. नुदुटनु श्रम जलमेल आ - कथयेमि तेलुपवे करुणालवाल (राम) /

- 12. चिन्तचे दागुदु वेरे मेनि - कान्तिचे तगिलिते कर्ममनेरे (राम)
- 13. मुत्याल सरुल चिक्केमि ओ - सत्य सन्ध पाद सरुल नोक्केमि (राम) /
- 14. मुदमुन ने पट्टु वेळ - ना पदमुन ब्रालेदरु पलुमारा वेळ (राम)
- 15. निन्नेमनि पिलुचुकोनिरि राम -मन्नतोनेमनि ऐञ्चुकोनिरि (राम) /
- 16. बाग साक्षि रम्मनिरि वर - त्यागराज नुत दैवमायनिरि (राम)

Mother Kausalya uses a lot of adjectives in this rare and long kriti, while addressing Rama!

O SriRama, the beautiful One! O Wealth of our Solar Dynasty shining on the Earth! O Kind-hearted! O My Lord whose gait is like that of an elephant in rut! O Merciful Lord! O bestower of boons! O Lord Raghava! O Kind Lord who bore me! O Ocean of Mercy! O Lord who is True to His word! O Unattainable Treasure! O Lord of Lords! O My boon-like Rama! O Charming One who is rare even for blessed celestials! O Fruit of penances done by me earlier!

May You sleep; may You sleep. Come; You come into the cradle, why do you hesitate to come near me, cheerfully? Are You hungry? If there is none of that, please tell me whatever is bothering you!

(Rama) - My playmates asked me to come for play; but, after playing, they said 'don't come back, henceforth'.

(Kausalya) - How dare they say and why? what fault did they find with You to ask You not to come again?

(Rama) - They played hide and seek by closing my eyes; but they admonished me that my eyes are too big to be contained in their little palms and hence could not close my eyes!

(Kausalya) - Alas! I understand now, but why should You have such large eyes like Lotus petals?

(Rama) - They closed my open eyes; but all my companions asked me not to go (when I was ready to leave).

(Kausalya) - I get it, but why this perspiration on Your forehead (in this cool weather)? Tell me what that story is?

(Rama) - They said 'Okay, we can ask you this time to "hide;" but that will start another problem, since you will be easily caught due to luster of your body! Your hiding is not going to be a good option for our side!

(Kausalya) - I get it, but tell me; why the strings of the necklace of pearls are entangled? And why are the strings of anklets too dented? What is the story about those!

(Rama) - Mother, you know, when I joyfully caught (everyone of) them, they all tumbled and fell many times at my feet at every one of those time(s), either attempting to hold my necklace or anklets.

(Kausalya) - Why did they call you every one of those times? What were they thinking?

(Rama) - They all said 'hey Rama, you are a nice witness for us in every one of our plays; please come therefore!

At this point, I have to submit my admiration on Swami's story-telling prowess, through songs with many stanzas and concurrently on my unhappiness on the current trend of singers/performers to use Tyāgarāja Kritis in abridged form for several reasons, some being outside the control of the performers. This practice unfortunately fails the general audience, aspiring performers and Karṇāṭaka sangītam in general in that the exquisite lyrics and beautiful story-telling are laid by the wayside, disappear from the memories, and lost forever. Hence the need to reiterate the importance of singing the entire composition of great composers in Karṇāṭaka Sangītam.

9) As for the popular Utsava Sampradaya kriti, 'Cetulāra Sringāramu,' there are several anecdotes!

- Yesteryear legendary musicians gave us great options, while enjoying the exquisite composition!
- A couple of doyens sang the kriti, Cetulāra in Natabhairavi ragam (one of them being Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer).
- Many others sang, and their disciples continue to sing in Kharaharapriya ragam – both major scales (or Mela/Janaka/mother Ragas).
- Some Sankeertana Bhāgavatās continue to sing in Bhairavi ragam; but all three renditions (in different ragas), if treated with dedication, are great to listen and enjoy.
- Over the last 60 years, another tradition is followed in many centers around the world, before commencing the annual Tyāgarāja Aradhana and just before starting the (Ghana-raga) Pancharatna kritis, to render Cetulāra (in Bhairavi ragam) as a prerogative of the flute Vidwans!

In Cetulāra Sringāramu, Thyagaraja becomes Kausalya decorating the little Rama and extolling the virtues of her extraordinary son. Kausalya says, "I shall decorate you with my own hands so beautifully as to elicit the admiration of even Brahma and other devotees and enjoy the sight myself. You will have golden anklets for your feet, high

class golden clothes for your dress. Your tuft will be decorated with sweet smelling Parijata flowers; your loins will have a girdle of golden beads; your forehead will be bedecked with a pendant of gems in the shape of the sun; your frontal head will be encircled with precious pearls and your body besmeared with sweet-scented sandal paste; after decorating you to my heart's content, I shall kiss you and hug you to my bosom. Saraswati will come and fan you then."

10) In *Bhavapriya* raga kriti, (Sri-Kānta, neeyēḍa-balātibala celanga-ledā?), Swami cleverly combines several episodes.

(i) Sage Viśvāmītra initiating the young boys Rama and Lakshmaṇa the two special mantras, 'bala and atibala,' chanting of which were believed to empower the chanter overcome hunger, thirst, and sleep. *Vālmīki* says in *Bālākāṇḍā*, Chapter 22, slokas highlighting the power of the two mantras and why Viśvāmītra initiated the boys with such exceptionally powerful and rare mantras.

- ग्रामम् गृहाण त्वम् - बलाम् अतिबलाम् तथा | [you receive a group of hymns, bala-ati-bala from me, and let no time lapse.
- न श्रमो न ज्वरो वा ते न रूपस्य विपर्ययः / न च सुप्तम् प्रमत्तम् वा धर्ष इष्यन्ति नैर्ऋताः | - On receiving these hymns neither fatigue nor fever, nor disfiguring of personality can affect you, nor the demons can attack you whether you are asleep or unvigilant.
- क्षुत् पिपासे न ते राम भविष्येते नरोत्तम | बलाम् अतिबलाम् चैव पठतः तात राघव || Oh, boys, if you go on reciting bala and atibala hymns, my dear Rama, there will be no hunger or thirst to you.

(ii) Tyāgarāja jumps to another important episode in the same song: 'काक दैत्युनु-एक शरमुनेय कञ्जजास्त्रमै परग लेदा - This refers to the episode in Ramayana when the crow demon (Kākāsura) harasses Seetamma when Rama was asleep; once awakened, Rama throws a blade of grass with the mantra of Brahmastra; the asura roams the three worlds with the astra chasing him and no one could come to his rescue. When about to be annihilated, he falls at Seetamma's feet to plead for her mercy. Sage Vālmīki describes the episode in many slokams in *Sundara Kāṇḍā* (Ch:38) - but through Seeta in *Asoka-Vanam*, narrating to Hanūmān as a confidential story known only to Rama! By the usage of the word, "Saramu," Swami reminds us of Seetā's message to Rama through Hanūmān, 'O Hanūmān, You narrate this (following) excellent confidential episode to your master, my beloved husband,' Seeta explains in greater details and two of the slokas are combined as under:

स दर्भ संस्तरात् गृह्य ब्रह्मणो अस्त्रेण योजयः / दीप्त इव काल अग्निः जज्वाल अभिमुखो द्विजम् (VR:5.38.30-31) ["Taking a blade of kusa-grass (darbha) from his mat, Rama charged it with the potency of Brahmastra. It then burst into flames like the blazing fire of universal destruction chasing the bird in all of the worlds."

11). One of the popular kritis sung in concerts is 'alakalellalāḍaka' in *madhyamāvati* raga. Swami wonders, "[चेलुवु मीरगनु मारीचुनि मदमणचे वेळ - अलकललललाडग कनिया राण्मुनि-येटुपोगेनो = I wonder how Viśvāmītra, that royal sage, enjoyed looking at Rama's curls being tossed about, with exceeding (meeraganu) beauty (celuvu), at the time (vELa) of subduing the arrogance (madamaṇacē) of mārīca (mārīcuni)! As usual, Swami does not feel content with one incident; he then points to the scene in Janakā's Rāja-sabhā to which the sage deliberately drags the young princes to 'witness' the Swayamvara of Janaki, the exemplary princess of Videha-dynasty. The sage makes eye-contact with Rama at the most appropriate time and Rama gets up and walks to the Shiva-dhanus and breaks it as he attempts to string the bow! - "मुनि कनु सैग तेलिसि शिवधनुवुनु विरिचे समयमुन, 'मोमुन रञ्जिल्लु' Swami says that it was the other time when the sage was in raptures looking at Rama's curls tossing about at the Swayamvara hall! While Vālmīki's account mentions the direct instruction given by the Sage, "विश्वामित्रः स रामस्तु - श्रुत्वा जनक भाषितम् | वत्स राम धनुः पश्य इति राघवम् अब्रवीत् || Vishvamitra-along with Rama, listened to the announcement of Janaka, when the sage said to Raghava, "O, son Rama! Look at the bow" [1-67-12], Tyāgarāja describes Rama, as being very intuitive, when he sings, "at the eye-wink of Viśvāmītra, Rama walked to the bow to string it!"

Kavicakravarti Kampan exclaims in *Rāma-kāthai*, 'தடுத்திமையாமல் இருந்தவர், தாளில் மடுத்ததும் நாண்ருதி வைத்ததும் நோக்கார் கடுப்பினில் யாரும் அறிந்திலர்; கையால் எடுத்தது கண்டனர்; இற்றது கேட்டார்!' (கார்முகப் படலம் 32-34)

= "Those who were looking awe-struck, without batting their eyelids, could not see anything or any sound, but just saw him lift the bow in his hand and heard the big sound of that breaking!

12). In one of the rare kritis of Tyāgarāja – Eka-raga-kṛiti in **Kaikavasi**, is “वाचामगोचरमे मनसा - वर्णिम्प तरमे राम महिम” – where Swami says” Is it possible to describe the greatness of Rama? It is indeed beyond description! (i) while He thrashed the demon Māricā who came as a deer, (ii) He slayed Subāhu - रेचारि मारीचुनि पडग कोट्टि - रेण्डो वानि शिखि-कोसगेने (वर्णिम्प तरमे) – what an extraordinary poetic genius of Swami to compact 8 slokams of Vālmīki into a half-line sentence! Vālmīki says (1.30.14-22) that Rama used mānava-astra to immobilize and throw Māricā to a distance of 100 yojanas (about eight hundred miles back to Sri-Lanka). The Lord spared Māricā’s life so that he could communicate with Rāvaṇā and counsel him to abandon his bad thought (before coming as a golden deer). However, since the evil Subāhu had to be punished, Rama sends Agneyastra to kill him.

13). Tyāgarāja says, in one of his two ‘Chandrajyoti raga compositions, ‘शशि वदन,’ “O Rama, you humbled me by removing my terrible vanity, which arose in my mind, while performing daily oblations such as domestic-fire-worship, recitation, penance, meditation; just as what You did to Māricā. दिन दिनमु-औपासन-जप-तप-ध्यानमनु-यागमु वेळ मनसुन पुट्टिन - घन डम्बुनि तोडनु मारीचुनि - पनि चेरचिनया /त्यागराजार्चित- शशि वदन].

- While he brings Māricā episode in many kritis, why this special reference मारीचुनि - पनि चेरचि? Vālmīki elaborates on Māricā’s confession when he returns to Rāvaṇā, savagely beaten and thrown out by Rama: अवजानन् अहम् मोहात् बालो अयम् इति राघवम् | विश्वामित्रस्य ताम् वेदिम् अभ्यधावम् कृत त्वरः || [3.38.18] “Unmindfully trivializing him as, ‘this Raghava is just a boy,’ I ran in haste towards that Fire-altar of Vishvamitra.” Vālmīki continues over the next six slokams, how the ‘humbled’ Māricā admonishes and cautions his nephew Rāvaṇā, “His astra hit me plunging me in the ocean a hundred yojanas off! That Vāliant Rama did not wish to kill me then; my life was spared, oh, dear boy Rāvaṇā, but the thrust of Rama’s arrow so bewildered me that I was on my last legs. तत् मया वार्यमाणः त्वम् यदि रामेण विग्रहम् | करिष्यसि आपदम् घोराम् क्षिप्रम् प्राप्य न शिष्यसि || [3.38.18] “Therefore, if you wish to make any confrontation with Rama, despite of my proscription, you will ruin yourself by getting into a disastrous calamity.” Tyāgarāja specifically refers to the destruction of the pride of Māricā in this kṛiti.

Something to be borne in mind when learning, reading and analysing the divine and fabulous compositions of Tyāgarāja, as a knowledgeable devotee comes across several kritis where Tyāgarāja indulges in self-recrimination or self-condemnation. Great Scholars and Acharyas aver that none of such were pertinent to the humble and austere Tyāgarāja, but it is his way of awakening the millions of ignorant souls in need of redemption from such bad attributes!

14). In his madhyamāvati kṛiti, ‘शरणु शरणुचु [Saraṇu-Saraṇanucu], Swami combined poetic excellence, grammatical accuracy, and anecdotal beauty all in those three stanzas.

- In the first stanza, Tyāgarāja plays on the words, शरमु तरम तरमु गाक काकासुरुडु सुरुलनाये वेड गानु = ‘When that blade of grass with Brahmastra-invoked by Rama was splitting into many and were chasing the evil son of Indra – Kākāsura, all the demigods and even Brahma and Shiva could not provide shelter and protection to the asura who became scared, dejected and confused, and surrendered to you to seek your protection, O Rama! Did you not save him?
- In the second, Swami jumps to the times of MahaBharata when the impetuous Durvasa-muni, upon instigation by the rival prince Duryodhana, decided to put Pandavas and particularly Draupadi to a difficult test (re: the legendary magical bowl gifted by Sri Krishna), it was the Lord, again, who saved Draupadi from the wrath of Durvasa. Did you not save her and get praised by Devas and good people on your Grace?
- In the final stanza, Swami refers to two remarkable events, (i) first one from Ramayana, मदिनि बेदरु सुदतिनि कनि नीदु पदमुलु दयनु धरलोनु ब्रोचे – O Rama, didn’t your feet save that poor woman Ahalyā waiting in anguish (for eons) as a stone in the forest? And (ii) the Second from Kṛita-yuga, धर संहरण-अरि-दमन - O Slayer of enemy (Hiranyāksha) who seized the Mother Earth!

15). Though only a fleeting reference to Ahalyā was found in the above song, Swami makes a more direct reference to Ahalyā through the rare ‘Amritavāhini’ song, ‘श्री राम पादमा नी कृप चालुने - चित्तानिकि रावे’ - O Holy Feet of Sri Rama, Your grace is indeed (more than) enough; kindly get firmly implanted in my mind. Well, here is the reason: ‘दारिनि शिलये तापमु ताळक - वारमु कत्रीरुनु राल्वग - शूर अहल्यनु जूचि ब्रोचितिवि आ रीति धन्यु सेयवे = ‘You gave redemption to that brave ahalyā who had been shedding tears unable to withstand distress as a wayside stone! Can you not protect me too in the same manner? O Holy Feet of Sri Rama!

16). Sadguru seems to enjoy bringing the Ahalyā episode repeatedly in many kritis; but he combines that with other instances from Ramayana in the Begadā kriti, “नी पद पंकजमुलनु ने नेर नम्नानु” as he praises the Lotus feet of the Lord.

- ‘भू पालुल गर्वम्बुलणचु कोरका- परमेश्वरु चापमु द्रुञ्चिन’ - I have trusted/relied on Your Lotus-Foot which - broke the bow of that Lord Paramesvara, for humbling the pride of the Lords of various kingdoms on Earth.
- कोपमुतो मुनु तापसियिच्चिनशापमुन अहल्य अनु-दिनमु चाप राति तनु तापमोर्व लेनापेनु कनि परितापमु तीर्चिन
Those feet that relieved the pitiable condition of ahalyā who could not bear the constant distress lying as a black stone because of the curse angrily pronounced by her ascetic husband, Gautama.
- वन-रुह तुलित नयन संक्रन्दन तनयुनि बाध सहिम्पनि विरोचनसुतुमति कलिगिन भयमेगयग घनतम दुन्दुभि पेनु तल तन्निन (नी पद)
I trust ‘That’ foot which kicked away the heavy and huge dead body of asura Dundubhi, to show the prowess and help remove the doubts and fear caused in Sugrīva’s mind, who suffered intolerable troubles from his brother Vāli

This last anecdote mirrors Vālmīki’s description in kishkindha kāṇḍā, chapter 11:

एवम् उक्त्वा तु सुग्रीवम् सान्त्वयन् लक्ष्मणाग्रजः | राघवो दुन्दुभेः कायम् पाद अंगुष्ठेन लीलया || VR:4.11.84

तोलयित्वा महाबाहुः चिक्षेप दश योजनम् | असुरस्य तनुम् शुष्कम् पादांगुष्ठेन वीर्यवान् || VR:4.11.85

“Saying so to Sugreeva in a comforting manner, he that dexterous and vigorous Rama, the elder brother of Lakshmaṇa sportively flipped the skeleton of Dundubhi with his big toe and flicked that withered body of the demon with his big toe itself to a ten yojana distance without lifting his foot.

As mentioned earlier, a third of his compositions touched upon Ramayana, sometime one episode in a song and the rest of the time, more than one episode from different cantos in one song.

17. In the Darbar Kriti, ‘एल तेलिय लेरो’ he says, बाल तनमुन शूल धरुनि विशाल धनुवुनु लीलगा भूपालकुलु कन केल विरचि कुशालुगा श्रीनेलिन नित्रेल- एल = ‘even while you were very young, as hundreds of kings from all over Bharat were watching, You broke the huge bow of Lord Siva sportingly’ (an episode from Bala-kāṇḍā – look at the poetic command of the Sabdāṅkārā!) – Swami then narrates in the next stanza, an episode linked to Rāvaṇā-Vadham: नालुगु-ओक पदि वेल कञ्चु – रथाल सुर रिपु मूल बलमुल लीलगानोक कोलनेसि / काल यम पुरि पालु जेसिन नित्रेल = You sportingly dispatched fourteen thousand (warriors in) bronze chariots and the core strengths of Rāvaṇā, to the abode of the Lord of Death by shooting just a single arrow.

[Commentators have differing views on this description by Tyāgarāja, as to the basis; but a closer look at the Chapter 93 in Yuddha-Kāṇḍā, we can see Vālmīki’s -‘चतुर्दशसहस्राणि सारोहाणान् च वाजिनाम् | पूर्णे शतसहस्रे द्वे राक्षसानां पदातिनाम् || (6.93.32) – [How one arrow of Rama annihilated....] fourteen thousand horses with their riders and a full two lacs of demons fighting on foot. Tyāgarāja uses his imagination to make this into fourteen thousand bronze chariots and their riders!

18. Three, very popular, songs, (i) *Elā nee daya rādū* (in ‘Atāṇā’), (ii) *Sogasu jūda taramā!* (in Kannāḍa-gauLa), and (iii) *Lāvaṇya Rama* (in Pūrṇashadjam) – are Tyāgarāja’s visualization of (i) Rama’s grandeur when he walks to the palace of Janaka (attracting Seetha’s attention and) (ii) Tyāgarāja’s ecstasy at the unparalleled beauty of Rama’s walk into the court of Janaka and (iii) ‘Seeta’s astonishment looking at Rama’!

19. Tyāgarāja swami dedicated two dozen kritis to celebrate (to his heart’s content) the austerities connected to the wedding of Rama and Seeta which his disciples later classified under a group known as ‘*Utsava-Sampradaya-Keertanams*’ – commencing with a Chūrnīkā (describing the grandeur of the marriage hall showcasing Sri Rama and his entourage) and twenty-five songs starting with ‘*Heccharikagā-rārā*’, the Mangaḷāsāsanam invocation in the form of a ‘kaṭṭiyam’, a form of poetry in maṇipravālam style (Sanskrit and Tamil or Telugu admixture).

Goddess Andal (8th CE) introduced the formal marriage-ceremony-proceedings in poetry format through her magnum opus work known as ‘*Nācchiyār Thirumozī*’ and this Paddati is followed even today in millions of South Indian families conducting weddings. Then came Yogivarya Sri Narayana teertha (1650-1745 CE) who gave a detailed account of the wedding procedure, dedicating the 12th and final Tarangam to Rukmini Kalyanam, in his Krishna Leela Tarangini. This is followed by millions of families of Telugu-desam (Andhra Pradesh) and Tamiz-desam, even today. The next one to follow that, at least in a limited form in 25 songs, was Tyāgarāja Swami (1767-1847 CE).

Most of the families who follow Telugu and Tamiz Sāmprādāya (tradition) of south Indian weddings, especially with some interest in music, regularly include most of these ‘*utsava-sampraya-keertanams*’ in their family weddings for over 150 years! Some of the frequently used songs, are ‘*Heccharikagā-rārā*,’ ‘*Seeta-Kalyāna-*

vaibhogame’, ‘Nagumomu galavāni,’ ‘Nāpali Sri Rama,’ ‘(Seeta)Patiki hāratīre,’ Vadanadhyuti jitasoma, and Sobāne!’

20. From the same group of Utsava-sampradaya, a song that stands out is a popular ‘pavvalimpu’ song (lullaby) “Badalika-tīra pavvāincave! बडलिक तीर पव्वळिञ्चवे ‘O Rama, rest well to get rid of your fatigue.’ This is a popular song used by Sankeertana Bhāgavatās in Divya-nāma-Sankeertana Paddati and also for Divya-dampati-Vivāha group of songs for over 125 years. Thanks to some of the yesteryears’ doyens using this song as one of the main pieces for their stage performances, this song is popular among current concert artists as well. This has a single Charanam or stanza, but it is a stellar example of the prowess of Tyāgarāja in doing a ‘samkshepa’ or concise Rāmāyaṇam in just eight lines.’

‘पंकजासनुनि परितापमु कनि पंकजाप्त कुल पतिवै वेलसि पंकजाक्षितो वनमुनकेगि जिंकनु वधियिञ्चि- मंकु रावणुनि मदमुननणचि निशंकुडगु विभीषणुनिकि बंगारु-लंकनोसगि सुरुल ब्रोचिन निष्कळंक त्यागराजुनि हृदयमुन (बडलिक तीर पव्वळिञ्चवे)
‘O Blemishless Almighty, who, (a) seeing the misery of Lord Brahma (b) (descending &) shining as the Lord of the Solar race, (c) having gone to the forest along with Seeta, (d) having slayed asuras, (e) having subdued the arrogance of the villain Rāvaṇa, (f) having bestowed the golden Lanka to the (steadfast) non-doubting Vibhīshaṇa, please lie down in the heart of this Tyāgarāja to get over your fatigue from all those exacting deeds you accomplished!’

21. For curious young learners, here is some additional information; of the twenty-five songs of Utsava Sampradaya, eleven of them are classified as ‘Pavvālimpu pāṭalu’ (Lullaby songs). We already enjoyed the “Sahana” kriti in the beginning of this article when we saw Kausalya and Rama have a conversation in ‘Rama Rama Rama Lali Srirama.’ ‘Uyāla lūgavayya Sri Rama’ and ‘Lali-yūgave māpāli daivamā’ both in Neelambari have become household songs popular with young mothers trying to make their toddlers go to sleep (commonly called ‘uyyāla pāṭalu’).

22. Due to space constraints, (while attempting to compact appreciation of about 200 songs into an article of few pages), I am forced to simply list some fairly well-known songs and offer extremely limited appreciation. Swami did not compose any song on Rama without highlighting his greatness of his avatārā or specialty of an episode from Ramayana or without emphasizing the fact (as per Tyāgarāja’s unshakeable belief) that Rama was on par if not beyond the Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva (the three manifestations of Brahman). Whether it was a kaTTiyam song or a pavvālimpu or a ‘Jola-pāta’ (Cradle song) like ‘Jo Jo Rama Anandaghana Jo Jo,’ there was always a direct or indirect reference to one of Rama’s life incidents. As I mentioned in an earlier section, when Swami sang the two ‘melukolupulu’ songs, ‘Melukovayya’ and ‘Meluko dayānidhī,’ due to his overwhelming adoration for Rama, he sings the two songs which fall under ‘Suprabhātakāvya genre’ as though Rama is the Cakravartī (the Emperor supreme) and not the young boy that Kausalya awakens. Many songs see such instant switches due to Swami’s overwhelming adoration for his Rama.

23. In Raghuvēera-Raṇadheera rārā! (Husseini raga kriti), heralding him as the one who humbled the great Parasurama by (accepting his challenge &) stringing the ‘Sārnga Bow’ (aka Vishnu-Dhanus), jumps to Yuddha kāṇḍā hailing Rama as the one ‘रावण घट कर्ण बलाराति रिपु नग नगारि स्थावर जंगम रूप - ‘O Lord you are like Indra to the mountains, when you smashed Rāvaṇā, Kumbhakarṇa and Indrajit! [Nagāri = Indra known as enemy of mountains].

24. Tyāgarāja, as he is describing the beauty of Rama and Seeta walking to Ayodhya after their wedding in ‘Nadaci-Nadaci-Jūcè (नडचि नडचि जूचेरयोध्यानगरमु कानरे) admonishes the fake actors, ‘focusing half-closed eyes, posturing to be motionless in dhyana, holding a rosary, for all appearances wearing a garb of a yogi but faking to be a true bhakta’ – they will never get to see ‘Atmā-Rama, dahara-Ayodhya-nagara-nivāsi’. In the popular Kharaharapriya kriti, ‘Pakkala nilabaḍi,’ while Tyāgarāja pleads to Seeta and Lakshmaṇa to include himself to Rama’s entourage, there is a hint of jealousy that he could not get that close to Rama as his wife and brother!

In the Dhanyasi kriti, ‘Ramābhirāma manasu-ranjilla paluka-rādā?’ रामाभिराम मनसु - रञ्जिल्ल पल्क रादा? Tyāgarāja describes Seeta decorating the bed of Rama and asks whether he would also get to talk with Rama as though he is specially blessed to take a peek at the Ekanta-seva of Rama being served by the beautiful Seeta. He sings many in that tone, starting with Vidamu Seyave (विडेमु सेयवे ननु विडनाडकवे) where he describes in detail, how he has prepared his tāmbūlam for Rama similar to how Seeta would have done (while Lakshmaṇa stands holding the gem-studded spittoon) and cautions Rama that he should be treated the same way (as Seeta would be)!

“उपचारमु जेसेवारुन्नरानि मरवकुरा” and उपचारमुलनु चकोनवय्य उरग राज शयन both in Bhairavi Raga are classic Divya-nama-Sankeertana Paddati songs for about 130 years and slowly found their rightful place on the concert platform when legendary Karnāṭaka Sangita Vidwans introduced both as main kritis. Sankeertana Bhāgavatās used to make comments in levity that the first is a short upacāram and the second is the long upacāram!

In the short song, Tyāgarāja admonishes his favorite Rama, as though in jealousy, “O Consort of Lakshmi! Just because there are always people waiting to serve you, please do not forget me. Just because Anjanēya is present vigilantly at the door itself, your younger brothers, who do Your bidding, are always with You, and Jānaki is anointed in Your privacy, and thinking “why should I need anyone else,” please do not forget me. In the ‘long upacāram song,’ Tyāgarāja submits the conventional service of providing a golden umbrella, a pair of ornate Chāmarams (bushy-tail used for gentle fanning), a special fan with the wafting fragrance of jasmine, (magnolia) campaka, sweet marjoram, double jasmine and Kuruvaeru (*vetiveria-zizanioides*).

25. The next major (scene) change follows Rama’s and Seeta’s short-lived relaxed stay in Ayodhya, **and events rollout fast as Rama-Lakshmaṇa and Seeta get ready to go to the forest**. A rare song ‘O manasā, manasāmartyam Emi?’ in a rare raga Vardhani (janyam of Kokilapriya)= मनसा मन सामर्थ्यमेमि ओ मनसा/ विनु साकेत राजु विश्वमने रथमुनेक्कि - तन सामर्थ्यमुचे ताने नडिपिञ्जेने/अल नाडु वसिष्ठादुलु पट्टमु कट्टे - पलुकुल विनि वेगमे भूषणमुलनोसगिन कैकनु - पलुमारु जगम्बुलु कल्ललनिन रविजुनि मायवल वेसि - त्यागराज वरदुडु ता चनग लेदा (ओ मनसा) O Mind! Listen! What avail are our skills? Lord Rama, the rightful king of Ayōdhya; mounting on the chariot called the Universe, is driving it Himself by His own skill! That (strange) day, didn’t He, by casting His own Māyā net, change (the mind of) kaikēyī who, immediately on hearing (through her maid servant Mandara) the decision of Vashishtha and others regarding crowning of Rama, gifted away her ornaments (to her maid servant)? And (don’t you remember O mind?) poor Sugrīvā often lamented that the World is illusory (Māyā)? So, what avail are our skills?

26. Another long song, ‘Karuṇājadhî, Dāsarathî” in KedaragowLa raga, **not fully sung** by most of the stage performers, has three stanzas, each one with a different mood. Sadguru imagines himself standing in SriRama’s presence and asks questions and pleads with him in a Nindā stuti style and finally surrenders!

- In the First stanza, Pitru-vākya-paripālanam; the statement using the word janaka thrice shows his extraordinary chamatkara! “जनक तनयावन चतुर्मुखजनक जनक-वचन सु-परिपालनमु जेसिन = O Protector of Seeta. who is the daughter of King Janaka! O Father (janaka) of Brahma, the four-faced! O Lotus Eyed (Rama) who conducted well, the word (or Order) of (your) father (janaka)!
- In the second stanza, “सुर मुनि वर नुत सरसमुतो ननु करुणिञ्जिते नीदु तण्डि सोम्मु वेरवक पो नेरदु ऐन्दुकु वादु? = If You gracefully show mercy towards me, Your ancestral property will not go away! do not be worried. Then, why this dispute (or reluctance and argument)?
- In the final stanza, he surrenders, “मनसु चाला विनदुरायीतनुवु नीदनि विनुति जेसेद” – My mind will not listen to me; this body is yours, and that is how I have always worshipped you! (Then, how can you ignore me O the Ocean of Mercy).

27. Tyāgarāja is well-known for raising tricky questions often sounding territorial or admonishing but also in great praise! Here are a couple of those.

- In the Sriranjani kriti, ‘Sari Evvare! Sri Janaki Nee,’ he praises the greatest dedication and devotion of Seeta in following Rama to the forest and serve him as ever!
“सरियेव्वरे श्री जानकि नी // परमात्मुनिके गडितेरि सदा सिरुलिच्चुटकु चेरि कोलिचिन नी (सरियेव्वरे) // वनमन्दु भयंकरमैन तावुन निल्लुननि मनसु तेलिसि कनकांगियन्दुन राज सुखम्बुनु कल्पा जेसितिवे त्यागराज नुते (सरियेव्वरे) = O Mother Jānaki! Who is equal to you? The most competent consort of Rama, the Supreme Lord, You served Him always ‘having stood firm that ‘I shall stay in the forest (even if a terrible place);’ understanding His mind, isn’t it that You made available such royal comforts to him at once?
- In the Kīranāvālī kriti, ‘Parāku neekela Rama? पराकु नीकेलरा राम ?’ Swami combines two incidents – Sabari moksham and Guha samrakshanam in the form of a question - “पुरान शबरियोसंगिनयट्टु ने भुजिञ्चुकोत्र शेषमा राम? धरा तलमुन गुहुनि वले पत्र तल्पमोनर्चितिना (राम?) = Did I offer left-over food like Sabari? Or did I offer a bed of leaves on the surface of the Earth like Guha? (You were so graceful and accepting other service even if less than par, but) when it comes to me, why do You show lack of concern? [Vālmīki Ramayana (3.74.17/18) – Sabari said to Rama: मया तु विविधम् वन्यम् संचितम् पुरुषर्षभ (17)/तव अर्थं पुरुषव्याघ्र पम्पायाः तीरं संभवम् | (18) - “O the best of

men! Produce of the forest of every description growing on the brink of (river) Pampa has been gathered by me for you, O Rama.

- Other than in Vālmīki Ramayana, only other reference on the subject is from Padma Purana. **Even there**, in the four slokams that the Purana refers to Sabari (267-270), the only reference to fruits appear in Sloka 269. अर्चयामास भक्त्या वै हर्षनिर्भरमानसा । फलानि च सुगंधीनि मूलानि मधुराणि च ॥ [PP:6.242.269] = She worshipped them with devotion, her mind filled with joy and offered them fragrant fruits and sweet roots (with no mention of tasted fruits!)
- Ironically, we read and listen to many stories that Sabari handed many fruits after biting them to taste and hand the best! Maybe because Tyāgarāja says, repeatedly, as in ‘appa (~abba)-Rama-Bhakti’ = ‘Sabari engil icchunā?’ [See below].

28. Another Song that Tyāgarāja dedicates to Sabari’s exalted status is ‘ऐन्तनि ने वर्णिन्तुनु शबरी भाग्यमु – “How much can I describe the exalted blessedness of Sabari?” Tyāgarāja seems to get overwhelmed when he describes Sabari’s service to Rama in the whole song. Rama was simply the witness to Sabari’s liberation and not the cause!

- Let us see that through the prism of great Saint ‘Sri Vedanta Desika (1269-1370)’ who despite his enormous prowess struggles to describe her greatness and simply refers to Rama as ‘Sabarī-moksha-Sākshi-Bhūta’. **Swami Desikan** covers the glorious incident of Sabari Moksham in his last salutation related to Aaranya-Kāndā. In Gadyam 41, **Swami Desikan** says: अवन्ध्य मुनि जन भजन मुषित हृदय कलुष शबरी मोक्ष साक्षि भूत! जय ! O Lord (Rama), **who was the witness to Liberation of Sabari**, who through her devoted service to the assembly of sages of unblemished reputation had all of her blemishes removed! Hail to Thee! Hail to Thee! Rama was just the witness to the liberation of Sabari; Rama did not grant her liberation. Sabari had already qualified for that status of blessedness!.
- Tyāgarāja almost echoes Vedanta-Desika’s expressions by ecstatic usage – ‘समुखम्बुन पुनरावृत्ति रहित-पदमुनु पौन्दिन = (Sabari) attained the state of non-return (liberation) in the very presence of Sri Rama.

29. In the Pantuvarāli kriti, ‘appa Rama bhaktiyentō gopparā mā(yappa)’ - *Devotion to my (our) Father Rama is indeed the greatest* - Tyāgarāja lists a lot of anecdotes – one-liners - “(i) शबरियेगिलिच्चुना (ii) चन्द्र धरुडु मेच्चुना (iii) अबल स्वयम्प्रभकु दैवमचल पदविनिच्चुना (iv) कपि वारिधि दाटुना (v) कलिकि रोट कट्टुना = [Had it not been for such an unparalleled devotion,

- **would Sabari offer already-tasted fruits** (usually deemed unfit for offering)?
- **would Lord Siva glorify Him?** [Re: Shiva answering Parvati as included in Vishnu Sahasranāma, ‘श्री राम राम रामेति रामे रामे मनोरमे । सहस्रनाम तत् तुल्यं रामनाम वरानने ॥ In chanting Rama’s name again & again, I discover joy in Lord Rāma who pleases my heart and whose face is a blessing. His name is equal to the one thousand names of Lord Viṣṇu].
- would Lord Rama bestow eternal state to the maid Svayamprabha?[reference found only in adhyaṭmarāmāyaṇā]
- can a monkey (Hanūmān) leap across the mighty ocean?[Ref: Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam – Sundara 1.38-42]
- can a woman (Yasoda) tie the Lord to mortar? [Little Krishna becomes Dāmodara by this episode]

30. Another strange question of Tyāgarāja is from the Ramapriya Raga Kriti ‘Sande hamunu teerpumayya’, in which he questions, “नन्दार्चित पद युगमुलु मेलो? नागरीकमगु पादुका युगम्बुलु मेलो? सन्देहमुनु तीर्पुमय्य” = ‘O Ramayya! clear my doubt: which is superior – whether Your **Feet** worshiped by the four mind-born songs of Brahma (Sanaka and others) or the elegant pair of **sandals** of Your Feet?’

- “भरतार्चन चे पादुकलु”- [Background: Repeated efforts and plea by Bharata to convince Sri Rama to return to Ayōdhya failed to move Rama from his firm conviction (of remaining in the Forest as ordained by his mother Kaikeyi). Left with no other option, Bharata places a pair of sandals in front of Rama and requests Him to step on them. The obliging brother does so for a moment and then steps down. Bharata, then, carries the Paduka on his head and proceeds to Nandigram, places the sandals on the throne of the Kingdoms and looks after Rāmarājyam as a servant of Sri Rama and refuses to go back to Ayodhya until Rama’s return from the forest].

31. Tyāgarāja’s composition in Darbar Raga, “Mundu Venukayirupakkala tōdai Mura-Khara hara rara” मुन्दु वेनुकयिरु पक्कल तोडै मुर खर हर रारा = O Slayer of demons mura and Khara! Please come as my companion in

front, behind and on both sides of me is described by Harikatha exponents as representing one of the incidents in Sadguru's life.

- As per widespread belief of the descendants of the disciples of Swami, this song was sung when Tyāgarāja and his entourage were returning to Thiruvaiyaru from Tirupati, when near Nāgalāpuram forest, thieves surrounded them. It goes further that the entourage was saved by two young strangers who came garbed as soldiers to guard the party.
- A similar incident that happened in the life of Goswami Tulsidas (1511-1623), believed to have been the first incarnation of Vālmīki in Kali Yuga is worthy of mentioning here, since Tyāgarāja salutes Tulsidas (his predecessor) in Prahlada-Bhakti-Vijayamu (and is believed to have been a strong influence on Tyāgarāja!). As per traditional accounts, some Brahmins of Vāraṇasi, out of jealousy, sent two thieves to steal the manuscript of Rāmcharitmānas. The thieves attempted to break into the Ashram of Tulsidas but were confronted by two guards (one black and another fair-complexioned) with bows and arrows. The thieves reconsidered and prostrated to Tulsidas in the morning to ask who the two guards that stood 'guard' the previous night. Realizing that the two guards could be none other than Rama and Lakshmaṇa, Tulsidas was distraught that his gods were guarding his home at night.
- **Bhavishya Purana** (in Pratisarga Parva, 4.20), mentions as follows: वाल्मीकिस्तुलसीदासः कलौ देवि भविष्यति / रामचन्द्रकथामेतां भाषाबद्धां करिष्यति = Lord Shiva says, O Goddess [Parvati]! Vālmīki will become Tulsidasa in the yuga of Kali and will compose this narrative of Rama in the vernacular language. Similar belief prevails amidst millions of Dharma devotees that Tyāgarāja was the next incarnation of Vālmīki, again in Kali.

32. In the Vachaspati Kriti, 'कण्ट जूडुमी ओक पारि क्रे(कण्ट)' Tyāgarāja pleads, 'O Rama, if you can appreciate so generously and praise Lakshmaṇa in front of Seeta (for building a beautiful parnasāla in Pancavaṭi), can you not even look at me with a side-glance (with some affection)? Tyāgarāja was inspired by Vālmīki's expressions on the subject. प्रीतो अस्मि ते महत् कर्म त्वया कृतम् इदम् प्रभो | प्रदेयो यन् निमित्तम् ते परिष्वन्नो मया कृतः || [3.15.28] = O, Lakshmaṇa, I am pleased at the excellent job you have done; for that reason, I am giving you a hug that you richly deserve.

33. Two kritis stand out for mention about the great Jaṭāyu, the King of Eagles. In the first (Yadukulakambhoji) kriti, Entanucu Sairintunu, Tyāgarāja's exquisite poetry has been interpreted in diverse ways. "विराज वाहन विराजमान-क-वि राज रक्षक" – while some interpret this stanza as "O Garuḍa Vahana, protector of the shining Jaṭāyu", others interpret the "Kavirāja" to be Vālmīki and Tyāgarāja's salutation to him. The second Kriti is Varali Pancaratnam 'कन कन रुचिरा' in which Swami asks "(मृग मद ललाम शुभ नितिल) वरजटायु मोक्ष फलद" - O Bestower of (Moksha) emancipation to the blessed Jaṭāyu!

[Why was Jaṭāyu, a king of Eagles, respectably mentioned in the great Epic? In Vālmīki Ramayana there are some distinctive features that are not available elsewhere. One of them is the excellent pairing of great characters! All of them are like twin brothers, such as Rama and Lakshmaṇa, Bharata and Sātrughnā, Vāli and Sugrīvā, and Rāvaṇa and Vibhishana. There is also a description of twin bird characters. They are Sampati and Jaṭāyu. Both are noble vultures. Both are devotees of Rama and are his helpers. Jaṭāyu died fighting (Rāvaṇa) for Seeta. Sampati, on the other hand, gave all his hard-earned knowledge to the monkey-army that was almost dying because of exhaustion, lying on the darbha grass on the bank of the Sea-Setu. He saved himself and others and settled the arguments between the monkeys. The history of these bird brothers is very strange. They are known as Vulture Brothers, just 'birds.' But they were extraordinarily powerful vultures with huge wings, beaks, and sharp claws. But they had reasoning power, better than ordinary men! They communicated, with language, articulate and were blessed with divinity. They are special characters that pushed the incidents in the Ramayana forward].

34. There is reference to the two Eagle brothers and a whole lot of demigods et al. in a popular song in Mohana raga, "Mohana Rama". Swami summarizes exquisitely in four lines as to who are the blessed souls that served Rama in his battle against Rāvaṇa. Some of the one-word references by Tyāgarāja are astonishing, as is common in many of the exquisite compositions!

- धर मनुजावतार महिम विनि - सुर किन्नर किम्पुरुष विद्याधर सुर पति विधि विभाकर चन्द्रादुलु करगुचु प्रेमतो - वर मृग पक्षि वानर तनुबुलचे गिरिनि वेलयु सीता वर चिर कालमु गुरि तप्पक मै मरचि सेविञ्चिरि

Let us see the summary meaning: “Hearing Your greatness of incarnation as ‘human’ in this Earth, celestials, kinnara, kimpurusha, vidyādhara, Indra, the head of celestials, Brahmā, Sun, Moon and others, melting with love, having embodied as blessed animals, birds (पक्षि - Sampāti and Jatāyu) and monkeys, O Consort of Seeta shining (गिरिनि वेलयु) on the Mount Suvēla!

- **Vālmīki** in (Bālakāṇḍam-Ch-17) मायाविदश्च शूरांश्च वायुवेगसमान् जवे | नयज्ञान् बुद्धिसंपन्नान् विष्णुतुल्य-पराक्रमान् || असंहार्यानुपायज्ञान् दिव्यसंहननान्वितान् | सर्वास्त्रगुणसंपन्नानमृतप्राशनानिव || अप्सरस्सु च मुख्यासु गन्धर्वीणां तनूषु च | यक्ष-पन्नग-कन्यासु ऋक्ष-विद्याधरीषु च || किंनरीणां च गात्रेषु वानरीणां तनूषु च | सृजध्वं हरिरूपेण पुत्रांस्तुल्य-पराक्रमान् ||”

Let ‘monkey-type’ progeny with Vishnu’s valor be born of prominent apsara-s and Gandharvās, from women of Yakshās and pannagās, and from the bodies of kinnarās, vidyādhārīs, rukshīs and female monkeys, and they shall be wizards of miracles and audacious ones, in travel they shall have air’s speed, bestowed with intellect they shall be the knowers of ideation, and with their divine physique they shall be ineliminable, they shall be endowed with all the assaultive aspects of all missiles, and they shall be untiring in their efforts, like you who thrive on amrita, the ambrosia, unmindful of thirst and hunger. [1-17-3, 4, 5, 6]

- **Why does Tyāgarāja say:** ‘Rama shining on Mount Suvēla?’ – Vālmīki says: ‘स तु कृत्वा सुवेलस्य मतिम् आरोहणम् प्रति| लक्ष्मण अनुगतो रामह सुग्रीवम् इदम् अब्रवीत् || विभीषणम् च धर्मज्ञम् अनुरक्तम् निशाचरम् | मन्त्रज्ञम् च विधिज्ञम् च जलक्षणा परया गिरा || सुवेलम् साधु जैल इन्द्रम् इमम् धातु जतैज् चितम् | अध्यारोहामहे सर्वे वत्स्यामो अत्र निजाम् इमाम् || [6.38.1,2,3]

Rama, who was followed by Lakshmaṇa, having made up his mind to ascend Mount Suvēla, spoke in a gentle and prime voice to Sugreeva and to Vibhishana (who was the knower of what is right), who was experienced in counsel and a knower of prescribed rules (as follows): “We shall ascend to the high point on Suvēla, shining well with hundreds of minerals. All of us will stay on this mountain for this night.”

35. Another unusual demand of Tyāgarāja comes in the popular Charukesi song, “Aḍa-modi-galadā Rāmāyā, Māṭa(lu)?” repeating an exquisite episode in (Vālmīki) Ramayana when Rama makes Lakshmaṇa talk to Hanūmān in the first meeting. चदुवुलन्नि तेलिसि शंकरांशुडै सदयुडा-शुग सम्भवुडु भ्रोकक / कदलु तम्मुनि पत्क जेसितिवि =

Isn’t it (true) that when Hanumān, Vayu-Putra, an aspect of Lord Siva, and highly erudite in all aspects of Knowledge - saluted You (and enquired about You), You asked your younger brother (Lakshmanā) to respond (with details) to him? Is it fair to be obstinate to talk to me who has held You as my refuge and my constant companion (like a shadow) and endowed with devotion to You (always)? There are different interpretations by different scholars for the above question – depending upon whether the question is ‘galada? Or galadè? But the article’s focus is about the anecdotes of Ramayana and hence let us leave at that.

- In the (3rd chapter of) Kishkindha-kāṇḍā (- Hanūmān meets Rama), Vālmīki dedicates 38 slokas, half of which are for Rama’s analysis of (Sugrīvā’s messenger) Hanūmān’s introductory salutations and his mission through his poignant, polished diplomatic message and Rama’s wonderment at the ‘debonaire’ of Hanūmān; finally, Rama tells Lakshmaṇa, “एवम् विधो यस्य दूती न भवेत् पार्थिवस्य तु | सिद्धयन्ति हि कथम् तस्य कार्याणाम् गतयोऽनघ || (4.3.34) = O, faultless Lakshmaṇa, except with the help of such a great envoy, how can a good King accomplish his mission (and hence the victory)?[4-3-34]

37. Swami in his Vasanta-Varāli kriti “pāhi Rāma dūta jagat-prāna kumārā mām”, refers to Hanūmān’s Vedic scholarship and many other qualities by dedicating the whole song on him.

[पाहि राम दूत जगत्-प्राण कुमार मां / वाहिनीश तरण दश वदन सूनु तनु हरण (पाहि)

1. घोर-असुर वारात्-निधि कुम्भ तनय कृत कार्य पारिजात तरु निवास पवन तुल्य वेग (पाहि)
2. पाद विजित दुष्ट ग्रह पतित लोक पावन वेद शास्त्र निपुण वर्य विमल चित्त सतत मां (पाहि)
3. तरुणारुण वदनाब्ज तपन कोटि संकाश कर धृत रघुवर सु-चरण कलि मलाभ्र गन्ध वाह (पाहि)
4. करुणा रस परिपूर्ण काञ्चनाद्रि सम देह परम भागवत वरेण्य वरद त्यागराज विनुत (पाहि)

Summary: O Messenger of SriRama, O Son of Vāyu who leaped across the ocean; slayer of Akshayakumārā (youngest son of Rāvaṇā! (O Hanūmān) who dried up the ocean of terrible demons as Mahāmuni Agastya did; you are resident at the root of Parijāta tree! You move about with the speed of wind and subduer of the malefic planet(s) with your feet! You sanctify those who have fallen from righteous path! You are the greatest among those masters of Vedās and Sāstrās! O, blemish-less (minded)! Your face resembles the rising Sun! You shine as if ten million Suns have risen together! You hold in Your hands the holy feet of Sriraghuvara! You are the wind which drives away the cloud of impurities of this kali yuga! replete with compassionate feeling towards devotees, your

body is like the Mount Meru (in firmness and hue)! besought by the great devotees of Lord! bestower of boons to devotees!

38. Swami gets overwhelmed when he sings on Hanūmān and repeats several of the sentiments of the above song, Pāhi-Rāmā-dūtā in another great song in Surati, ‘Geetārthamu’ where he says, **सीतापति चरणाब्जमुलिडुकोत्र-वातात्मजुनिकि बाग तेलुसुरा (गीतार्थमु)** = The meaning of Gītā and the Bliss attained through sangītam are well known to Anjanēya who is holding in his hands the lotus-Feet of Lord Srirama.

- This one song deserves a detailed analysis since it is soaked in philosophy about ‘Gita’ and ‘Sangītam.’ A handful of modern day ‘performers or singers’ of this great tradition of Karṇāṭaka Sangītam attempt to detach divinity and spirituality from Karṇāṭaka-Sangītam and politics of atheism and nihilism in to even music. Tyāgarāja Swami gave fitting answers in about a dozen songs - to these modern-day characters - about Sangītam, spiritual purpose and Bhakti and one such is ‘Geetārthamu.’ **“गीतार्थमु संगीतानन्दमु(नु)-ईतावुन जूडरा ओ मनसा” - वातात्मजुनिकि बाग तेलुसुरा!** Behold, in this place (right here) the true meaning of the Bhagavad-Gita and Bliss attained (attainable) through ‘Sangītam.’ These (truth) are well known to Hanūmān (the great son of Vayu).
- There is a poem great Tamil treatise on (Bharata-Nāṭyam or) Tamizh-Dance/drama-code-book known as “Bharata-Senapathīyam [பரத-சேனாபதியம்] attributed to a ‘littérateur’ named (ஆதிவாயிலார்) Adivāyilār (>11~12th CE). This book was reported to be one of the five books which the great literary ‘narrator’ (உரையாசிரியர்) adiyārkkunallār (அடியார்க்கு நல்லார்) used as his basis for his treatise on the Great Tamiz work ‘Silappadikāram’ – revered by scholars of Tamiz culture and literature *comparing it to Iliad of Homer (in Greek literature)*. The poem from Bharata-Senapathīyam on Hanūmān - அனுமன் விவாதிகள் கருவமடங்க அசுமருருகக்-குண்டகக்கிரியாவெனும் இராகம் பாடியடக்கி மேலும் சன்னிய ராகமாறாயிரஞ் சமைத்ததற்கு-அனும-கடகம்-எனும் பெயரணிந்தனன்(45). The incomparable excellence of Hanūmān in Gandharva-Sangītam (the basis for modern Sangītam) is highlighted by this exalted poetry. “when there was argument between Tumburu and Narada as to superiority and proficiency of deva-Sangītam, it was Hanūmān who sang the Raga Gundāka-kriyā which humbled them to retreat. Hanūmān, then created another six thousands ragams and named the collection as ‘Hanūmān-kaṭakam.’ [there is also an anecdote that Hanūmān’s creation of a raga became known as ‘Hanumat-tōḍi’ (the 8th Melam of modern-day Karṇāṭaka Sangītam)].

39. In the ‘tōḍi’ kriti, ‘Endu-dāgināḍō?’ – Swami covers the Vāli incident adroitly by saying that his adorable Rama was simply “Hiding to protect Sugreeva from violent Vāli ” - **clever story telling to offset the infamy of killing Vāli from behind.** He adds other instances; two of them stand out as if to justify the killing of Vāli in that fashion!

(i) अल नाडु कनक कशिपु निण्डारु चलमु जेसि सुतुनि सकल बाधल पेट्टग मदिनि ताळक निश्वलुडैन प्रह्लादु कोरकु कम्बमु लोपलनुण्डग लेदा आ रीति नेडु -एन्दु-दागिनाडो ईडकु)

(ii) मुनु वारि वाह वाहन तनयुडु मदमुन रविजुनि चाल कोट्टुट जूचि मनसु ताळ जाल लेक प्रेममुन पालनमु सेय ताळ तरवु मरुगुन निल्वग लेदा आ रीति नेडु -एन्दु-दागिनाडो ईडकु)

(i) That day, when Hiraṇya-kasipu, resorting to evil-trickeries, troubled his son inexplicably, was not HE, unable to tolerate, (found) inside a pillar (ready to emerge) for the sake of that unwavering Prahllāda?

(ii) Earlier, finding Vāli arrogantly thrashing (his brother) Sugrīvā a lot, and unable to bear that sight, was not HE (found) standing behind a palmyra tree in order to lovingly protect Sugrīvā? [who knows where He is hiding today and when will He have compassion to come here!].

40. Tyāgarāja (- Devagandhari kriti ‘Nā Morālimpavemi SriRama?’) competes with Sugrīvā and Vibhishana and complains to Rama that he is partial to them – for unusual reasons! Swami’s poetic chamatkara is revealed here:

1. ओक वन चरुडु-अल नाडु सहोदर बाधलु ताळक मोरलि-ब्रोचितिवि तनकु सुग्रीवमु कादा (नामोरालिम्पवेमि)

2. ओक निशि चरुडु-अन्न - माटलोर्वक शरणनगा - शुक् वचनमुलकु नाडु पलुकुलन्नि विभीषणमा (नामोरालिम्पवेमि)

1. That day, when a forest dweller (Sugrīvā), unable to bear the taunts and troubles caused by his brother, complained, You (readily) protected him. [Is it because he has **Su-Grīvāa?**- fine throat?] – well, (Rama), I too have a fine throat! (why not me?)

2. When a night prowler (Vibhīṣhaṇa – who came running to you at midnight in darkness), who was unable to bear the painful words and abuse by his elder brother, sought Your refuge, You (readily) protected him. Is it

because his words are all sweet and parrot-like, while all my talk/words (*palukulanni*) sound hoarse (*Vibhīshaṇama*?= terrifying) to You?

41. In this rare *Pūrṇālalita* (19-m) raga kriti), '*Kalugunā pada-neeraja-sevā, Ganda-vāha-tanayāa*!', Tyāgarāja's admiration, adoration, admiration and also a bit of jealousy – all on Hanūmān - come out as an amalgam, within the '*anecdotes within anecdotes*' prompting great Acharyas and scholars (in explicable-ecstasy) describing their commentary '*laissez faire*'.

“कलुगुना पद नीरज सेव! गन्ध वाह तनय / पलुमारु जूचुचु ब्रह्मानन्दुडै परगे भक्ताग्रेसर तनकु (कलुगुना)

वेकुव जामुन नी करमुननिडि श्री कान्तुडु-अमृत स्नानमु जेसि पाकमुलनु श्री रंगेशुनिकि-अर्पणमु जेसिता

सीता करमुलचे भुजिञ्चि निनु सात्वीक पुराण पठन सेयमने साकेत पतिनि सर्वाधारुनि प्राकटमुग – कलुगुना

O the veritable son of wind-god (with wind carrying the sweetest of smells)! You are the foremost of 'Bhaktās'; You have the privilege of experiencing the Supreme Bliss by always beholding the Sri Rama! [the Consort of Lakshmi, the King of Ayōdhya].

At pre-dawn hours, the supreme Lord takes nectar-bath from Your hands; after (you hand to him and) your Lord offers the sacred prasadam to Lord Ranganatha, Rama takes the prasadam from the hands of Seeta; and then, He commands You to read out the holy scriptures to him (while resting). Will it be (ever) possible for me too, to have such a unique privilege of beholding the Lord manifestly and perform such incomparable service to/at His Lotus Feet?

The words used pointing to great anecdotes are many but let me select a couple here!

- 'श्री रंगेशुनिकि-अर्पणमु जेसि' – Lord Ranganatha archā-murthy, worshipped by Lord Brahma, was given to Emperor Ikṣvāku of 'Raghu Dynasty,' who brought the Deity to his capital (Ayodhya). The Deity, through lineage, came to be worshipped by Sri- Ramacandra-prabhu. When the visiting Vibhīshaṇa requested Sri-Ramacandra, in Ayodhya (after the yuddham) to gift him the Deity so that he could carry to worship in Lanka, Ramacandra agreed with a condition that Vibhīshaṇa should not place the Deity on the ground until reaching Lanka, and that if he did so, the Deity would ground itself then and there. By one version, Vibhīshaṇa placed Lord Ranganatha down at Srirangam, near the confluence of rivers at Cauvery, while performing his evening ablutions, and thence Sri Ranganatha became immovable from there, forever! Nevertheless, at the plea of Vibhīshaṇa, unlike most Deities who face East, Ranganatha faces South towards Lanka to bless Vibhīshaṇa and his kingdom.
- निनु सात्वीक पुराण पठन सेयमने – (O! गन्ध वाह तनय!) Rama made you read Sāttvīka Purānās (after lunch)! What are they? The Maha-Purānās are eighteen (18) in number; the Sāttvīka group consists of (i) Vishnu-purana, (ii) Bhāgavata-purāna, (iii) Nāradya, (iv) Garuḍa, (v) Padma, and (vi) Varāha Purānās. While I believe that Swami knows all and why he wrote that Hanuman was reading the Sāttvīka Purānās (after lunch), there remains a plausible question that Ramayana belongs to the 'treta-yuga' and the Purānās were written by Vedavyasa in Dvāpara Yuga!

42. **Due to paucity of space, I am abridging many songs and incidents reluctantly, but here is a small group of similar sentiments and anecdotes:**

- '*Mānamu-ledā – tanavādani-abhimānamu-ledā*' – a classic nindā-stuti in 'Hameeru-Kalyāni' – a raga that came from the north Indian musicians around that time; Swami gifted this extraordinary song, one of many kritis where Tyāgarāja specializes in Nindā-stuti (praise with some admonishment or skepticism)! "O Rama, we do not find another person like you, so bereft of all affections, like You! O Father of kuśa and Lava, who delights in music, when Sugrīvā, in Your presence, spoke ill of You (impatiently and in indignation), You made him King of kishkindha; but as usual, you seem to forget that I am Your devotee!
- '*Munnu Rāvaṇā*' in tōḍi raga is another classic; Swami asks, 'have You forgotten Your words, about appellations (greatness) of Your dynasty? "मन्निन्तुननुचु कुल बिरुदुलनु पोगडिनमाटल मरचितिवो श्री रामचन्द्र?" (what are so special about those words?) – (i) Earlier, unable to bear the troubles created by his elder brother Rāvaṇā, when vibhīshaNa surrendered and pleaded – highlighting the appellations of Your dynasty, did you not say, 'I shall honor him'? (ii) Earlier, unable to bear the troubles created by vAli, when Sugrīvā extolled You, witnessing his pitiable plight, did you not redress his grievance (by killing Vali and anointing Sugrīvā)? (iii) Earlier, unable to bear the troubles created by his father hiraNyakaSipu, when prahlAda entreated You as "O slayer of demon mura!", did you not take care of him 'completely'? [Swami combines *Sugrīvā Pattabhishekam, Vibheeshana*

Saranagati resulting in Pattabhishekam in two simple stanzas, adding the great incident from the prior Yuga – all in one].

43. Three more songs highlight Vibheeshana Saranāgati and Rama’s greatness of protecting him and handing the kingdom to him by putting down the demon Rāvaṇā. These have been popular kritis for the last 70 years or so.

(i) *Pariyācakamā in Vanaspati*, Swami asks with indignation, “Are my words – extolling - You in public (in front of ten people) funny?[i.e., if I say, ‘give me refuge,’ are those words funny?]. Well, you applied a different standard when (a) When Draupadi, out of scare for sage durvāsā’s rage (and tendency to curse), pleaded ‘give me refuge, O dvAraka-natha!’, (b) when vibhIshaNa, unable to tolerate the harshness of his elder brother Rāvaṇā, pleaded ‘give me refuge’, and (c) when prahlAda, out of grief, said ‘give me refuge’ – ‘did you feel that their pleas are ‘funny’?”

(ii) *Mrudu bashana in the rare ‘maruva-dhanyasi (22) ragam’* is a delight for musicians of yesteryears. O soft-spoken (bhāshaṇā)! O Lord worshipped by Vibhīshaṇa! [Venerable Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna popularized this rare kriti]. A small digression! The only other composition in Maruva-Dhanyasi (Nannu Brova Jagelara) was from Thiruvottriyur Tyāgayya (1845-1917), son of Veena Kuppayyar (one of the famous disciples of Tyāgarāja Swami).

(iii) ‘*Cesinadalla maracitivó*’ [चेसिनदेल्ल मरचितिवो ओ राम राम] in tōḍi is one of the popular kritis which the legendary musicians delighted in singing it (often) as the main piece in their concerts! This venerable composition highlights three significant incidents of Ramayana, one of which is unique (conferring the *Brahma-paTTam* on Lord Anjeneya). Tyāgarāja asks, “O Rama, the embodiment of Tyāgarāja’s Love! Have you forgotten what all you did for your other devotees, like in those exceptional circumstances, (i) ‘Considering Seeta to be Your worthy devotee, did you not, without any hesitation, befriend (that monkey king) Sugrīvā (for locating Seeta)? (ii) Did you not make vibhIshaNa, king of lanka, without failing on Your Word, by asking Your brother (the incarnation of Adi Sesa) to take care of Vibhishana?and, (iii) Did you not confer on the awesome Anjaneya, who conveyed You the greatest of news of the location of Your consort Seeta, the most exalted title of ‘Brahma’?”

[सीताभाम माटलु तेल्लु - भीमाञ्जनेय ब्रह्म (चेसिनदि) – after learning (the scary details of incarceration from the great) Seeta from Hanūmān, that you made Anjaneya the ‘Brahma’-

Where from Tyāgarāja learn that Rama chose to confer Anjaneya that title? Did Vālmīki narrate any such occasion? The quick answer is ‘no, there is no reference in Vālmīki Ramayana (or other interpretive versions of Ramayana).

But Vālmīki did explain the emotional outpouring of Sri Rama and how he embraced the great Hanūmān!

अहम् च रघवंशश्च लक्ष्मणश्च महाबलः ॥ वैदेह्या दशनिनाद्य धर्मतः परिरक्षिताः ॥ इदम् तु मम दीनस्य मनो भूयः प्रकर्षति ॥ यदिहास्य प्रियाक्ष्यातुर्न कुर्मि सदृशम् प्रियम् ॥ [6.1.11 &12] “By finding out Seeta, the Raghu dynasty as well as myself and the valiant Lakshmaṇa too, have been rightly saved today. But it squeezes my conscience further, hopeless as I am, to think that I am not able to do a pleasant act befitting the bearer of these good tidings.”

एष सर्वस्वभूतस्तु परिष्वङ्गो हनुमतः ॥ मया कालमिमम् प्राप्य दत्तस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥ इत्युक्त्वा प्रीतिहृष्टाङ्गो रामस्तम् परिष्वजे ॥ हनुमन्तम् कृतात्मानम् कृतवाक्यमुपागतम् ॥ [6.1.13 &14] “Let me at least embrace this magnanimous Hanūmān since in the present circumstances, this is all that is easily obtained from me.” Thus saying, Rama joy-filled, clasped Hanūmān in his arms who, having his mission fulfilled, had returned. **That is more than a Brahma-paTTam.**

44. In Hari Kambhoji kriti, *Enduku nirdaya’*, Swami says: “why can’t you show me your daya when I have no one else to resort to? Look at the squirrel – one of thousands helping in its own might to help build the Setu?- “उडत भक्ति कनि उब्बतिल्लग लेदा? Did you not give Sāyujya to it? Don’t you look at your enemies and friends alike with your compassion?”

- For sure, there is no apparent reference in Vālmīki Ramayana about such an incident [squirrel being blessed with Sāyujya].
- **But the earliest reference**, to ‘squirrels’ serving and assisting the monkeys who moved mountains to build the Bridge to Lanka is from one of the famous Vaishnavite saints, Thirumazhisai Azwar [4,200 BCE or 200 BCE] says in Thirumalai (27),

“குரங்குகள் மலையை நூக்கக்குளித்துத்தாம் புரண்டிட்டோடித்தரங்க நீரடைக்கலுற்ற சலமிலா அணிலம் போலேன். மரங்கள்போல் வலிய நெஞ்சம் வஞ்சனேன் நெஞ்ச தன்னால் அரங்கனார்க் காட்செய்யாதே அளியத்தேனயர்க்கின்றேனே.

[Azwar regrets this way: I am not like the humble squirrel which rolled in the sand and helped (by shedding the wet sand between the rocks placed as a bridge), when the monkeys pushed big rocks to build a bridge to

cross the ocean. With a heart full of vice, a heart as hard as wood, infamously I labored, without a single service to the Lord of Thiruvaramgam.

45. **Tyāgarāja combines three incidents**; humbling of Kākāśura; humbling of the King of the Ocean (Samudra Raja); and finally, Rama annihilating the army and strength of Rāvaṇa as if all of that were but a burning heap of cotton. “Sara-Sara-Samaraika Sura!” in Kuntalavarāli raga is another popular Kriti, rendered in fast tempo, enjoyed by rasikās and equally by young kids, the learners, and legendary musicians and by popular performers. शर शर समरैक शूर-शरधि मद विदार /सुर रिपु मूल बलमनु तूल-गिरुलकनल सममौ श्रीराम = “O Rama, you used a blade of grass as an arrow (Brahmastra, to humble and punish Kākāśura – but not kill him)! You destroyed the arrogance of Samudra-Raja! And, in the great battle, you were the “Fire” that destroyed the core strength of Rāvaṇā, as though it were a range the mountains of cotton!

There are another 35 to 40 kritis which need to be highlighted but let me simply list them while highlighting a handful:

46. Rāma-Bāna-Trāna-sauryam (Saveri) – Swami says, “How can I describe the remarkable protecting-prowess of Srirama’s arrows (astras) which drove the armies of Rāvaṇā (who coveted His companion), to bite the dust?”

- When Lakshmaṇa fatigued, when Rama noticed Rāvaṇā (and Indrajit) distributing sweets (on his minor victories), indrajit exhorting his forces to rise. When the forces rose considering it to be an opportune moment,
- Rama created thunderbolts of twangs of His bow kōdaṇḍa, and looked at Lakshmanā (with pride), his trust-worthy companion.

47. In Sarasa - “Sāma-dāna-Beda-danda” (Kāpi-Narayani) – Swami says: “O Rama, you are a noble King and hence used all the tactics of ‘Raja-dharma’, before annihilating Rāvaṇā”, but as per Vālmiki, Rama pursued only two of the four methods, Sāma and danda (conciliation through Hanūmān and battle to punish); and did not offer (dāna) anything else nor sow any dissensions – it was a dharma-yuddham! Tyāgarāja however claims all four हितवु माटलेन्तो बाग पल्कितिवि-सतमुगानयोध्यनित्तुनष्टिवि नत सहोदरुनि राजु चेसि राकहतमु जेसितिवि (Rama or Hanūmān who went on his behalf as the messenger, did not offer Ayodhya as a trade-off nor caused dissension by anointing Vibhishana before defeating Rāvaṇā).

[Although this was mentioned previously], In ‘appā, Rāmabhakti yento gopparā’ (Pantuvārāli) – Tyāgarāja avers “Devotion to our father Rama is indeed the greatest! If not, (i) would Mahalakshmi so deeply love Him? (ii) would Lakshmaṇa serve Him with such dedication? (iii) would Bharata, having such a sharp intellect, feel ecstatic beholding Him repeatedly? (iv) would Sabari offer (already) tasted fruits (unfit for offering)? (v) would Lord Siva glorify Him? (vi) would the Lord bestow eternal state to the maid svayamprabha? (vii) can a monkey leap across the mighty ocean? (viii) can a woman tie the Lord to mortar?

48. In ‘Brochevārevare (Sriranjani) – Swami asks many questions in eight short stanzas (or one-liners): “O Lord of Raghu dynasty! Whoever else than You is capable of protecting us gracefully, as you did (a) by giving Lanka as a gift to Vibhīshana, to the felicitation of Indra and others?(b) by following sage Viśvāmītra to look after the great sacrifices and punishing the wicked Māricā and others? (c) by shooting down Vāli with a single arrow and making Sugrīvā a king?

49. Tanavāri-tanamu (Begaḍa) is yet another song with Swami’s usual (jealous) questions! O Rama, why am I not getting the same treatment although I love you, adore you, and serve you? (Is it not true) that day, when (after the Crowning ceremony), You presented the precious necklaces to each and every one of the monkeys (your favorites) with overflowing love by calling each one by name? (Is it not true) that day, when food was being served, did you not seat the mighty monkeys alongside you in Your batch (This song is also the proud Tyāgarāja showing off his Rama’s exceptional qualities of Samadarsanam, Sakhya-bhāvam, equality, and humility!)

50. Three Kritis stand out as ‘Paṭṭābhisheka kritis’ (i) Seetamma Māyammā (Vasanta) (ii) Sri Raghukula (Hamsadhwani) and (iii) Koluvaī Unnāḍē (Devagandhari):

- In the first (Seetamma), Tyāgarāja says “Seetamma is our mother, and Sri Raama is our father. Anjanēya, Lakshmaṇa, Garuḍa, Satrugna, Brahmā, Bharata and others are brothers for us. Lords Siva, Ganesa, Subrahmanya, Indra, sages Vashishtha,’ Parāsara, Nārada, Saunaka, Suka, Gautama, Sanaka, and others, and all those whoever are true and foremost Bhāgavatās on the earth, are closest relatives to this blessed Tyāgarāja.

- In the second (**Sri Raghukulamandu**), Swami exclaims, “O Sri Ramachandra, born in the auspicious Raghu-dynasty, you married Seeta! You descended in order to fulfill the demands of the rishis and sages living in the forest! O Lord, abiding in Ayodhya to govern your devotees, You accepted holy ablution, in the sacred, precious stones-studded throne, by the hands of Brāhmaṇās (for consecration of the crown – Paṭṭābhisheka)!
- In the third (**Koluvai Unnāḍē**), Tyāgarāja gives an ecstatic, longer, description based on his divine visualization!

Behold! Lord kodandapāṇi is seated in His Court!

- accepting sacred food that is offered, sportingly, along with Seeta, Bharata and others,
- wearing golden (hued) garments and ornaments rivalling innumerable lighting streaks,
- pleased with the utterances, of sage Sanaka (and others), as proclaimed in the Vedās,
- nurturing those dependent on Him.
- the celestial dancing girls are elegantly dancing in His Holy presence, shining with wafting, fine scents,
- Parāsara, Nārada and all other sages are extolling Him,
- Indra, Brahma, and others are serving Him with a lot of admiration,
- My body is thrilled with joy beholding the moon-faced Lord shining on the couch of Se sha, Seeta applies fragrant sandal paste on Him.

51. In ‘**Vinanu-Asakoni**’ (**Pratapa Varali**) Tyāgarāja Swami boasts that he has the vision of Rama playing with Seeta the game of ‘Pallānguzhi’ (Swami uses the term ‘Omana-gunTalu’ in Telugu; ancient Indian indoor board game known as Mancala overseas), and that Bharata and Hanūmān were listening to the sweet arguments between Rama and Seeta! [There is no such episode described by Vālmīki and is it simply one of many imaginations of Tyāgarāja? Not necessarily. The basis seems to be an anecdote narrated by Periāzwar (Thirumozhi) in which he says, ‘Seetamma bound Rama by jasmine garland when Rama lost to her in a Chess game; and that it was narrated by Hanūmān as confidential information to bolster his claim that he was indeed ‘Rama-dhūtā’ – another imagination by another adoring admirer of Rama! [எல்லியம்போதினிதிருத்தல் இருந்ததோரிடவகையில் மல்லிகைமாமாலை-கொண்டு அங்கு ஆர்த்ததும்ஓரடையாளம் (1.3.10).

52. In **Baḍalika teera** (**Reetigaula**) – Swami shows the concern a mother would show to her dear child who returns exhausted, after a 14-year globe-trotting expedition – in this case from the punishing Vanavāsam! Strangely enough, he offers his heart for Rama to rest comfortably to get over the fatigue! “O Blemishless Rama, I can empathize with your exhaustion; (a) after seeing the misery of Brahma, you came down as scion of the Solar Dynasty, (c) having gone to the forest along with Seeta, (d) having fought and punished Mārīcā, (e) having subdued the arrogance of the vile Rāvaṇā, (f) having bestowed the “golden-Lanka” to the undoubting Vibhīṣaṇa, (g) and thus, protecting the celestials!”

53. Similar listing (as above) comes in “**Enta-rāni (tanaku) enta poni**” (**Hari Kambhoji**)” but with a nice casting of the players of Ramayana! “**ऐन्तरानि - तनकु-एन्त पोनि नीचेन्त विडुव जाल श्री राम**” – “O Sri Rama! No matter what happens to me or may whatever comes to me or leave me, I shall not ‘ever’ leave Your proximity. I know, but “Isn’t Lord Siva tha whatever comes to me or leave me, in this incarnation)? Isn’t Adi-Sesha serving You in the garb of Lakshmanā? Isn’t the great, wise, excellent sage Vashishtha’ serving as Your benefactor (or family priest)? Aren’t the hordes of celestials serving You by becoming monkeys for Your help?”

54. Tyāgarāja starts summarizing the greatness of Rama and then his consort Janaki, lot more specially!

(i) **Oka-Māṭa Oka-bāṇamu Oka patnī vratuḍē, manasā** (Hari Kambhoji kriti) is not only the simple, but a profound philosophical message of commands for yugas to follow and for the wellbeing of the steadily degenerating human society of today. “O My Mind! Lord Rama is vowed to one Word, one arrow and one wife! He has unwavering mind (or, single-willed)”

Swami seems to have taken the message from Vālmīki when Rama promises to Kaikeyi that He does not do double-talk and word is his commitment! तत् ब्रूहि वचनम् देवि राज्ञो यद् अभिकान्क्षितम् | करिष्ये प्रतिजाने च रामः द्विर न अभिभाषते || (2.18.30) (Rama says: “O queen! Tell me the words (command) of the king, as desired by him. I even promise to do it. **Rama does not speak two things.**”)

(ii) Throughout Ramayana, we notice that Rama uses one arrow to chase and punish Kākāsura, one astra to punish Subahu and Mārīcā and an army of demons, one astra to humble the Samudra Raja, and Tyāgarāja lists them out

in his Madhyamāvati kriti, Evariccirirā! Sara-Chāpamu neeku? ओकटेसि पदि नूरै वेयैचेकपिकलाडि शत्रुलनणचेनट = '(your) one arrow, multiplying into tens, hundreds, and thousands, subdued Your enemies by confounding them! (iii) Oka patnī vratuḍē - One of the reasons which places Rama above all heroes and human incarnations is his vow for one wife, lifetime, as Cakravartī making him earn the loft title of 'maryāda purushottama' is. Compare this with his own father Dasarathā, who is stated to have had 60,000 wives in addition to three queens. Even after Seeta was sent to the forest (sad indeed and many dispute the Uttara-Kāṇḍā), Rama ruled the Kingdom and did Aśvamedha Sacrifice with the Golden Statue of Sītamma by his side and never remarried.

55. Spiritually bent believers of Sanatana Dharma and readers of Puranas, hold and appreciate the popular belief that 'Chiranjeevi Krishna-dvaipāyana-Veda-Vyasa' (the codifier of Vedas into Catur-Vedās, writer of at least the eighteen Mahā purāṇās, one of the two great Epic MahaBharata, Brahmasūtra and the like) was born again in Kaliyuga about 1000 years ago as 'Bhakta Jayadeva' and wrote the *Śringāra-mahākāvya* 'Geeta Govindam' (24 ashTapadīs). The first of the twenty-four is known as Dasāvātāra- ashtapadi avers that Lord Krishna, the Pūrṇāvatāra, incarnated as the principal (Dasa-ten) avatārās and hence the 'refrain' for each stanza is 'Kesavādruta...(meena sarira, kaccapa rupa, sukara rupa).'

'Sadguru Tyāgarāja-swami' follows Jayadeva to the 'T' when he sang (deenajanavana), "दीन जनावन श्री राम," the famous Dasāvātāra-kriti completely Rama-centric. Swami sang, "Meena-Sarīra Sri Rama," "Kurmāvatāra Sri Rama," "Sūkara-Rūpa Sri Rama," "Narahari-Rūpa Sri Rama," and even sings 'Dasaratha-Nandana Sri Rama' and concludes as 'Haya-Mukha Rūpa Sri Rama (=Hayagriva incarnation).' Swami omitted 'Kalki avatārā' and Krishna Bhaktas often feel sad or offended that Swami did not mention 'Krishna-avatara', although we see indirect or slant reference in the 9th stanza, 'जय कर नाम श्री राम विजय रथ सारथे श्री राम भय नाशन हरे श्री राम [referring to the charioteer or Vijaya or Arjuna!] and ending that stanza with 'Haya-Mukha Rūpa'.

While the greatest of sages, rishis and millions of descendants universally refer to the incarnation of Lord Vishnu as 'Krishna' as the "Pūrṇāvatāra para-brahman", Swami calls Rama as 'Paripūrṇa avatārā' in the *Sahana* kriti (second stanza of), 'Raghupatē Rama Rakshasa Bhima', "परिपूर्णावतार पर भामिनी दूर" – This kind of serious bias or absolute dedication to one and only Rama can be appreciated, if one were to focus on the invocatory verse in 'Prahlada-bhakti-Vijayamu', "ishṭa devatābhivandanambunu, Sadguru dhyānambunu salpi, pūrva bhakta vratāmbunu gonyāḍi.....goes on to prostrate to all Bhāgavatās to help him complete his project! This is seen again in the *Dhanyasi* raga kriti,

'इष्ट दैवमु नीवेरा इलनु त्यागराजु वेरा (श्याम सुन्दरांग सकलशक्तियु नीवेरा)'

56. Finally, Tyāgarāja seems content by singing a samkshepa-Rāmāyaṇam (*Vinayamunu in Saurāshtram*) 'विनयमुनु कौशिकुनि वेण्टचनिनांघुलनुज्जुनदेन्नटिको अन्दुवेनुक रतिनि नाति जेसिनचरणमुलनु ज्जुनदेन्नटिको – followed by eleven stanzas, summarizing important facets of Ramayana to his delight – here is just the abridged meaning of the stanzas which are exquisite poetry.

- When shall I behold those holy feet,
- which, humbly, went behind sage / Viśvāmitra?
- which, afterwards, transformed stone into woman / ahalyā?
- which broke Lord Siva's heavy bow? / Seeta Swayamvara
- which were washed with milk by King janaka? / invitation to wedding
- When shall I behold those hands,
- which, lovingly, tied Mangala sutra to Seeta? (Seeta Kalyanam)
- which, angrily, seized the power of Parasurama's bow? (Parasurama garva-bhangam)
- which, having gone to the forest, slayed Virādhā? [Daṇḍakāraṇya]
- which, finding all those ascetics, bestowed to them freedom from fear?
- When shall I behold that arrow/missile,
- which, itself, protected crow demon? (Kākāsura punished)
- which, in a moment, pulverized enormous number of chariots?
- which slayed very strongly Vāli?
- which subdued the overweening pride of that Lord of Oceans? (Samudra-raja-bhangam)
- When shall I behold those eyes/sight,
- which, benevolently, looked at Vibhīshaṇa? [Vibhīshaṇa Saranāgati and later Crowning him]

- which, having slayed Rāvaṇā, revived the poor monkeys (slain/maimed in the battle)?
- which, pleasingly, looked at Sugrīvā?
- which always ensured Lanka's prosperity?
- **When shall I behold,**
- that elegance of shining on the magnificent Pushpaka chariot?
- that spectacle of finding Bharata and coming with him holding his hands?
- that splendor of His being seated on the golden throne.
- that decoration of assembly of eminent sages and kings in His court?
- the manner in which Siva and other great deities extolled Him?
- When shall I behold Him well, soonest,
- who is praised in Agamas,
- who is the root of Bliss,
- who is the beloved of great Bhāgavatās,
- who is ever-changeless,
- who reclines in the (milk) ocean and
- who is the Ocean of Mercy?
- **When shall I expect Him to come?**

57. After all the praise and jubilation, Tyāgarāja suddenly gets frustrated by a black mark on his Rama and the incident(s) leading to that. Swami pours out with anguish, **adigi Sukhamulu evaru anubhavincirira? (Madhyamāvati)** when he thinks of Seetamma being banished to the forest. "Has anyone ever enjoyed comforts by (asking for anything or) entreating You?

(a) Seeta asked for a boon (that she would like to visit the forest like in the past), and she got banished to the forest!

(b) Sūrpanakha asked You to fulfill her desire (of being wife); at once, she lost her nose!

(c) the famous sage Nārada asked for a boon (to know the nature of Maya); he then got the form of a woman!

(d) sage Durvāsa came to ask (the Pandavas) for food; at once he lost appetite!

(e) Devaki desired to behold the spectacle (of child-hood sports) of her son; but it was Yaśodā who enjoyed His sports!

(f) Gopīs asked for union with the Lord; but they had to abandon their respective husbands!
I do not know whether I get mercy on Your own accord, and that you would protect me; but Your secrets have been exposed. What kind of Grand illusion is this? O Rama?

58. Tyāgarāja suddenly sidelines Rama out of anguish as mentioned above and starts singing the exalted praise of his Mother Seetamma! **Two songs stand out:** 'dēhi tava-pada' and 'Mā-Jānaki cheṭṭa pattaga'

1) One of the finest summary benedictions on Seetamma, Supreme Mother, comes through the Sahana kriti, "dēhi tava-pada bhaktim vaidēhi, patita pāvani mē sadā (dēhi)." Swami lists an array of (incomparable) great qualities and this takes him to,

2) 'Mā-Jānaki cheṭṭa pattaga, maharājavu-aitivi? मा जानकि चेट्ट पट्टग-महराजवैतिवि' (Kambhoji) – Swami argues that there is no Ramayana without Janaki and that Rama's fame and greatness are only because of the universal Mother Janaki.

"O Rama, Emperor of emperors! Listen. You attained greatness because you married our Mother Jānaki! You attained great fame as vanquisher of Rāvaṇā because you married our Mother Jānaki.

(a) Proceeding (along with You) to the forest,

(b) donning shadow form, without disobeying your command,

(c) remaining with Fire-God (in Her true form),

(d) having gone (in shadow form) along with the demon,

(e) remaining at Lanka under the Asoka tree,

'did She not indeed bring great fame (as vanquisher of Rāvaṇā) to You by not reducing him to ashes by her eyes by getting enraged by his words?'

59. Tyāgarāja slips into a deeper remorse of having elevated Seetamma by putting down Rama, out of emotional immaturity! He therefore bursts out in his (Garudādhvani) song: "तत्वमेरुग तरमा (रामा) परतत्वं / तत्-त्वं-असि-यनु

वाक्यार्थमु राम नीवनु पर (तत्वं)/ तामस राजस गुणमुल तन्नकोळ्ळु पोदया -राम भक्तुडैन त्यागराज विनुत वेद शास्त्र (तत्वमेरुग तरमा) – summarizing pearls of Bhagavad Gita.

O Lord Sri Rama! (How can I judge you?) Is it in any of our capacity to realize the supreme Truth that You are, who is the very purport of the profoundly sacred statement ‘tat-tvam-asi’? Is it in one’s capacity to realize that Truth as brought out in Vedās and Sastras?[The sufferings caused by active & inert principles will not cease!]. – See Lord Krishna’s pearls to Arjuna!

- तामस राजस गुणमुल (राम भक्तुडैन) = Re: Bhagavad-Gita: ‘sarva-dharmān parityajya - mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja - ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpebhyo - mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ (BG:18.66) - Relinquishing all (other) dharma [i.e., Karma & Gyāna mārgās] take refuge in Me (through Bhakti-marga) alone; I will liberate You from all sins (and bondage of birth and death); grieve not.”
- tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayaṁ sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena cānagha (BG:14.6) - O sinless one! the mode of goodness (Sattva), being purer than the others, is illuminating, and it frees one, from all sinful reactions. Those stable in that mode (of Sattva) become conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge.
- तन्नकोळ्ळु पोदु: na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyaṁtyaktuṁ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥyas tu karma-phala-tyāgīsa tyāgīty abhidhīyate (BG:18.11) = It is indeed impossible for a (kārmic) human to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of (his) action is called one who has truly renounced (karma-phala-tyāgi).

60. A totally calmed down Tyāgarāja concludes: Rāma-Kathā Sudhārasa-pānamu oka-rājyamu-jesune! (Madhyamāvati) – Only the drinking of Rāma-Kathā (the great elixir of story of Rama who shines on the Earth along with Jānaki, Lakshmanā, Bharata and others) can be equaled “to ruling a kingdom.” Why, see the list: राम कथा सुधारस पानं-ओकराज्यमु जेसुने / भामा मणि जानकि सौमित्रि भरतादुलतो भूमि वेलयु श्री (राम कथा) धर्मादि-अखिल फलदमे मनसा! धैर्यानन्द सौख्य निकेतनमे कर्म बन्ध ज्वलनाब्धि नावमे कलि हरमे त्यागराज विनुतुडगु (राम कथा) Rāma-Kathā indeed bestows the fruits of Purushārtha; (b) it is the veritable abode of courage, bliss, and comfort; (c) it indeed is the boat which enables one to cross the flaming ocean of Worldly Existence, bound by Karma, and (d) it indeed is the destroyer of (evil effects of) Kali-yuga.

Epilogue:

Sadguru Tyāgarāja Swami’s kritis and the influence of Ramayana on more than a third of all his songs, need a much lengthier treatise. Due to space constraints, I have strived to capture the multi-dimensional beauty of his kritis, expressing unwavering Rāmābhakti, portrayed in exquisite poetry and deliberate finesse in his story-telling, flawless musicality and nuances of emotions in a much shorter format. Each kriti stands out, on its own, as a work of art, worthy of detailed exploration and extensive analysis.

- There is an increasing tendency (by many stage performers aka popular musicians) to short-change the lyrical component and bhāvam as though to highlight (just) the “musical” expression; this is a sad “development” indeed (over the decades), considering the fact that ‘only’ the combination of accurate rendition of lyrics, emotive bhāvam, and non-flashy delineation of classical music, together, creates an ambiance to allow serious listeners (‘rasikās’) to experience the “Sukānubhava”, somewhat akin to what Tyāgarāja might have experienced during spontaneous outpouring of these gems. In this author’s opinion, ‘skipping’ stanzas from a (purposely long) kriti with multiple stanzas, interrupts the flow of thoughts and the anecdotes that Swami wanted to convey; in the short run, be it the singer or the listener, misses the “intended-anubhava.” Eventually, as mentioned earlier, the unsung stanzas may disappear from the collective memory of this generation and forever be lost to the generations to come! That will be an irreparable and avoidable loss.
- Again, it is this author’s fervent hope that the “students of classical music” are taught (any song, and in particular all Tyāgarāja’s) songs without skipping and skimming, both the context and the meaning; at a minimum, at least one song per concert is sung in full so that the audience’s attention is drawn towards the exquisiteness of the composition.
- One of the sad trends in recent times, is the authoritative brash-talk, blogs, and interviews by a handful of concert planners, organizational office bearers, writers, and concert-singers that “their musical exposé, writings, talk, and Sangatīs (recorded for posterity) are what the current and future generations would remember as Tyāgarāja’s compositions and style of renditions!” Even if one grants that some singers embellish the song(s) by adding ‘new’ Sangatīs, one cannot overlook the fact that the great composer has gifted generations of musicians, since the advent of the 19th century, with superior musical frame work, weaving the

lyrical beauty and *content-par-excellence* as one inseparable work of art; the modern-day-musicians (or stage performers) may simply be adding ‘their’ superficial garlands upon the *Divine statue or portrait of the “Deity”* but the ‘Deity or portrait of the Deity’ can stand on its own, with or without those garlands, elegant in its simplicity and always Divine! [கடவுள் சிலைகளும் அற்புத-சித்திரப்படைப்புகளும் தானாகவே அழகுடையவை – வாடும் மாலைகளும் வாடா மாலைகளும் இல்லாவிட்டாலும்! – (quote from a poetry from TSRK ‘அழகுக்கு-அழகு’)]

- Lastly, Tyāgarāja did not declare “intellectual property rights” to his compositions and the (stage-performers and) concert artists, making monetary gains by singing his songs, do not pay Tyagaraja's descendants any royalty fees (for intellectual rights)! At least for this unique gift, they should be more grateful to him and not question whether Tyāgarāja deserved to be addressed as ‘Saint, Sadguru and Swami’!

Finally, (as I wrote last year in a related context), ‘Karnāṭaka Sangītam’ is Divine and spiritual in content and by rendition but also requires a modest understanding of its origin and uniqueness. The learner, performer and listener have a unique collective responsibility to approach it with humility. A good starting point is and will be the divine compositions of Sadguru Tyāgarāja Swami which have made a myriad singers/performers materially successful and continue to make them prosperous through Karnāṭaka sangītam!

Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha.

Thiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan

[Notes:

- (1) I place on record my heartfelt gratitude to the great Acharyas and spiritual scholars who have contributed their critical appreciation of Swami’s kritis, over the centuries, which have been the main source for helping me gather my thoughts and submit the above.
- (2) I pay my obeisance to HH Kanchi Kamakoti Sankarāchāryā, Chandrasekharendra Saraswati (aka Paramāchārya or Mahāperiavā) for educating me and teaching me as to how to appreciate scriptures Swami’s kritis (without bias) and for patiently clarifying my doubts from my early teens!
- (3) My obeisance to my Adi-Guru, Brahmasri Kumāramangalam Srinivasa Raghavan (Ragasri) who taught me music, the art of simple and spiritual life (despite being mired in mundane existence) and the ability to genuinely appreciate Swami’s pearls. I also thank my other Gurus, Maharājapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G N Balasubramaniam for teaching me (with meaning) some of the rare kritis, the very thought of which makes me emotional today.
- (5) I thank my disciple Dr. Rukmini Raghunathan, my publishing editor (for over 20 years) who has been my shadow in such writing efforts.
- (6) Finally, my companion for life, Radha Krishnan, who has performed her duty as the strongest critic in all my artistic endeavors and being another publishing editor for about 60 years!



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